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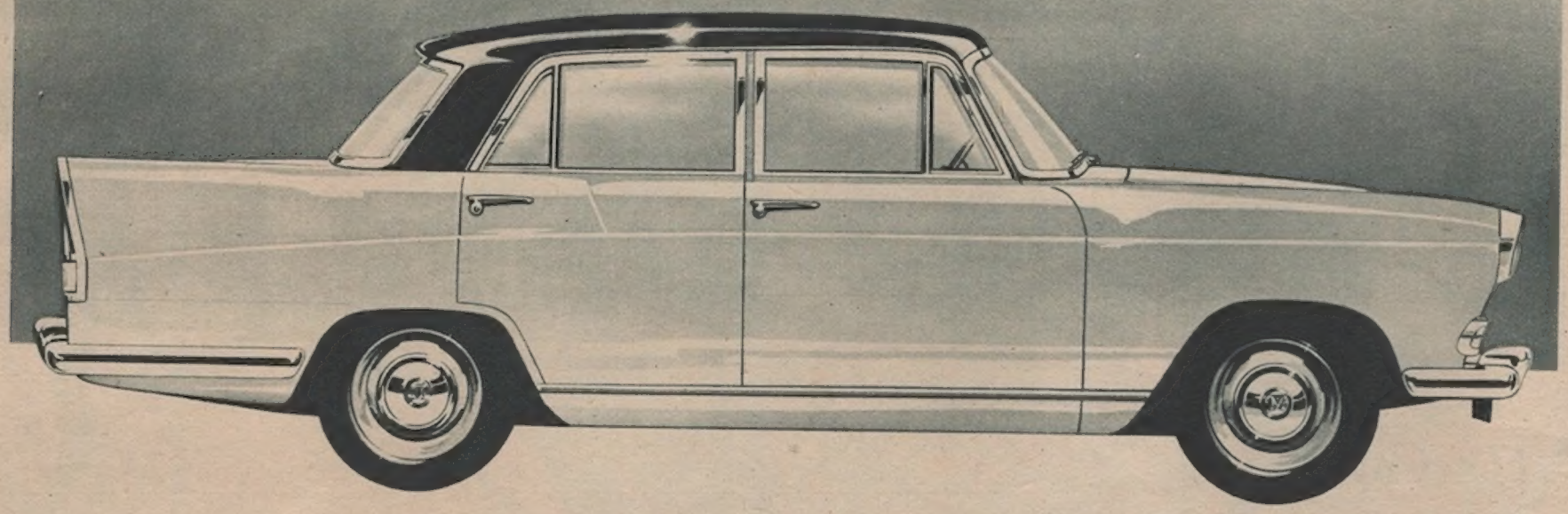

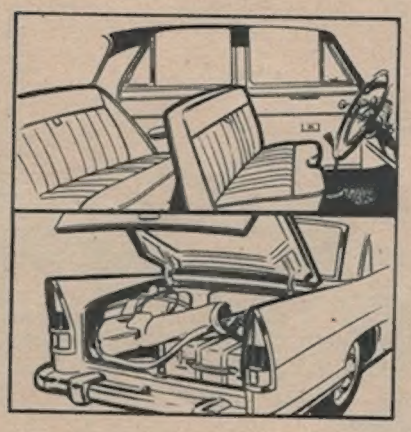

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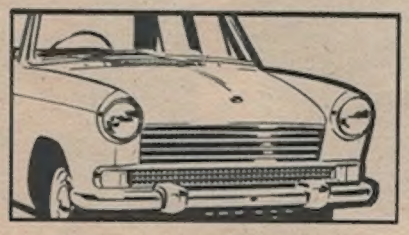

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Contents

ARTICLES

CAN NATO PROTECT US TODAY?
by Capt. B. H. Liddell Hart .. 9
GILBERT HARDING 12
THE PUTTER OF TINY WHEELS
by Anthony Hancox 13
SO YOU WANT TO GET FAT!
by Dr. Wilfred Halsey 17
WE SANK OUR FUTURE IN A GOLF COURSE
by Roy Carey 21

STORIES

BRACEGIRDLE AND THE TEEN-AGERS
by Thurman Warriner 10
MR. POST AND HIS GHOST
by Clive Burnley 18

SERIAL

EARTHSHAKER (Part 1)
by Robert Krepps 6

BOOK EXTRACT

THE MIRACLE HUNTERS
by George Sandwith 15

MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME

by Roger Smithells
SITTING PRETTY 25
MAKING THE COVERS .. 26
TAKE YOUR PICK OF TRIMMINGS 27
TV CHAIR 27
WORTH NOTING 34

FEATURES

THUMBTHING: 12. THE WITNESS STATES: 20. IN SHORT: 22. CURIOSITY: 24, 29, 30, 33. DACHSIE: 24. JOKES: 29, 30, 33. WE ADVISE: 34.

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The Cover

SPARE a thought for two proud parents who don't know what's in store for themselves. They've just seen a tomboy changed into a belle by her first grown-up dress. But bringing up Susie has been child's play compared with what comes next. Will Father look so happy when his little girl stops late at the ball? And how will Mother greet the first downy-cheeked suitors who are sure to start calling? Says artist Ostrick; "With girls one dress leads to another—and eventually to the altar."

Free Speech

JOHN BULL ILLUSTRATED pays one guinea for each letter published in "Free Speech." Readers with problems (other than medical) should write to our Free Advice Service, whose experts answer questions by post, and in our feature, "We Advise."

Dodging The Issue

RECENTLY we've been subjected to a high degree of publicity about the necessity of banning the sale of flick knives.

Personally I'm tired of listening to arguments in favour of banning things. If it's not books it's films or dangerous weapons—and always the arguments grow more plausible and less logical.

There is no danger in a flick-knife itself. The person who uses it represents the threat to law and order. And if someone uses a flick-knife, they'll just as soon use an open razor or a broken bottle. How can you ban broken bottles?

It's time we tried to face real issues and stopped taking the easy way out—in other words, if we reform the criminals, the instruments of crime will become harmless.—EDGAR BULSTRODE, Newcastle.

Workers, By Gum!

The views of a reader on Londoners ("Free Speech," March 14) seem to confirm a story I once heard.

A large corporation advertised a vacancy calling for London or Manchester qualifications, or their equivalent. A Yorkshireman replied, asking whether equivalent meant two London men or one Manchester man—or a Leeds man working half-time.—J. MIDGLEY, Scarborough, Yorkshire.

That Sinking Feeling

For years when travelling in cars and coaches I underwent that feeling of leaving my stomach behind when going over a hump-backed bridge.

Then a friend gave me a tip that works. Just before the bridge, take a deep breath.

Never since have I been troubled by butterflies in the stomach.—J. A., Hawthorn, Wilts.

"The reason for this peculiar feeling is that the stomach is a floating organ," says a doctor. "When the body moves suddenly in one direction it actually is left behind. Breathing-in gives the stomach less room in which to move."

No Sassenach Bites

Since coming to the north of Scotland I find it almost impossible to obtain English apples. Canadian and Italian in plenty—but no English.

I am told the transport costs are too high. By my reckoning Italy and Canada are farther away than Kent. Is there something wrong with English marketing?—JEAN MOSCATI, Meikle Ferry, by Tain, Ross-shire.

"In times of glut when English apples are plentiful, the dealers, who have to buy foreign apples by a quota, will ship their foreign apples direct to places like Scotland and try to sell them first," says the National Farmers' Union.

Choo Choo Cha Cha

It's obvious that British Railways disc jockeys—those who play the amplified records in main-line stations—are a lot of squares.

In all the years that I've been travelling I've heard mostly military marches and other straight tunes—no rock 'n' roll. This is unfair to rock fans.

British Railways as a nationalized industry has a duty to cater indiscriminately for all sections of the

travelling public.—VIOLET F. GORE, Clarence Road, Fleet, Hants.

"Rock 'n' roll is too noisy," says British Railways. "We once asked passengers what kind of music they wanted—the answer was marches in the morning and something less lively in the evenings.

"Another objection to rock 'n' roll records—incidentally, our music is played from tapes nowadays—is that they are nearly all vocals. And it would never do to risk confusion between announcements of train times and the words of an Elvis Presley number."

Shotgun Affair

Attending a wedding in our local church I remembered three local wedding customs which have now fallen into disuse.

One was the "first kiss." As the newly married pair walked up the aisle all the young men leaped from their seats and dashed to be the first to kiss the bride.

A shotgun was fired as the couple left the church.

Outside the house where the reception was held a "rough band," composed of anything from dustbin lids to accordions, made as much noise as possible until free beer was distributed.

We're much more dignified now—but do we have as much fun?—MRS. F. O. BREWSTER, Sutton, Woodbridge, Suffolk.

"I remember the last time the shotgun was fired, in March, 1937," says the Vicar of Sutton, the Rev. Penrose Berryman. "It went off at the foot of the church steps."

My Own Star

I heard of a contest in which women were asked which famous personality they would like to marry. It started me thinking that I was satisfied to have married a man who deliberately gave up the chance of fame for me and my two children.

My husband, Basil Melford, was chosen by Gertrude Lawrence as her favourite comedian, and turned down a chance to tour with her overseas and afterwards in America. He preferred to go on entertaining the troops.

He was the very last Ensa artist to appear in Berlin with Lou Preager's band. Then he caught dysentery in India, when touring for Ensa.

After the war he got another chance of stardom, but he gave it up at my request to make a home where we could all be together permanently.

He became a Civil Servant, and although he hated it, he never once grumbled.

Even now he is often stopped in the street by ex-Servicemen who remember him. He is still *my* favourite comedian.—MRS. ZOE MELFORD, Upper Fox Street, Leicester.

"I remember Basil Melford very well," says bandleader Lou Preager. "He was a very good comic and I often wondered what happened to him.

"In fact, I have often thought he would emerge on television—he would have been very good in that medium."

My Mirror Picture

What is the explanation of the freakish way my television set has been behaving since I did a spot of do-it-yourself improvisation?

A friend had an old set with a new tube. My set was in good order, except for the tube. I put the good tube in my set, which now works perfectly—except that the picture is reversed.

Cars drive on the wrong side of the road, words appear backwards

as they would in a mirror—and everybody shakes hands in the boy-scout manner, left-handed.—W. SIMMONDS, Norbury, London, S.W.16.

"The answer must be that you have put the scanning coils back in reverse, Mr. Simmonds," says a television engineer.

"Try reversing them. If that doesn't work, do what is always best in these circumstances—get a properly qualified mechanic to repair the set."

The Missing Mug

What has happened to the old-fashioned shaving mug? Having broken the one which I had for ten years, I sought a replacement and was met with vacant stares in several shops.

A china merchant told me I had better try an antique shop. Are they not made any longer?—CHARLES Y. RENNICK, Stamford Brook Road, London, W.6.

Don't They Like Us?

On holiday in Wales last year I saw several slogans in bold letters on farms and walls: "Go home, Englishmen." Later on I visited Scotland and encountered the same thing on the wall of a wayside farm in Perthshire.

This attitude strikes me as being extremely "clannish." I have yet to see slogans against visitors to England.—N. J. BARRETT, Worksop College, Worksop, Notts.

Work's Your Line?

I have often wondered whether one's work determines one's temperament or *vice versa*. It is noticeable, with very few exceptions, that

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14 BRANCHES THROUGHOUT THE U.K.

Free Speech

continued from page 3

factory girls, clippies, milkmen and postmen are usually of an optimistic and cheerful nature.

On the other hand chemists, caretakers, shoe-shop assistants and solicitors are in general miserable types.

Which is the cause and which the effect?—MRS. G. GEORGE, East Sheen, London, S.W.14.

Note Of Trust

Can anyone explain why the new five-pound notes are accepted by all and sundry without demur?

It was difficult to pass one of the old notes in a shop where you were not known; in fact, you were looked on with suspicion.—A. CROSSLEY, Farrer Road, Manchester 13.

Blush, Bacon, Blush

I realize that a well-displayed shop window sells goods, but surely the latest idea—of using red lamps to shine on meat and bacon—is a bit dishonest.

The lean looks red, but on reaching the frying-pan is found to be a very disappointing pale pink. A pity it can't blush!—MRS. W. M. SHARPE, Auckland Avenue, Hull.

The Sensible Swiss

A correspondent is curious about why Switzerland never goes to war ("Free Speech," March 7).

This is because its voters are called upon every month to vote on the problems of the day, thus giving political leaders irrefutable evidence of what the people really want.

It is never the voter who wants war—always the politician who can see no other way of saving face. —DEREK BROWN, Crofton Road, Orpington, Kent.

"On an average there are about three national referendums a year in Switzerland," says the Swiss Embassy.

"An optional referendum is a request for a national vote on any topic and must be signed by 30,000 citizens and eight cantons. Constitutional changes require an obligatory referendum."

. . . What muddled thinking—no votes for women in Switzerland seems to be both sensible and easy to understand. While the men of the country are so co-operative as not to go to war, why should women bother with the vote?

If ever things become less satisfactory, be sure that women will use their influence to get votes.—VERA PURSSELL, Fisherwick, Staffs.

Dangerous Reception?

Seeing the metal forest of television aerials which surmounts any street of houses in any built-up area, I wonder about the tremendously increased choice of points for lightning to strike.

How many householders, during a thunderstorm, have the presence of mind to switch the aerial over to "earth"—if, in fact, they have such a switch. Or is the danger only trivial?—H. HEATH, Hamilton Road, Reading, Berks.

"If lightning is going to strike your house the presence of a TV aerial makes very little difference," says a TV engineer. "To save the set itself, disconnect the aerial plug and switch off at the mains."

Don't Stay In Bed

A reader suggests that we should have longer holidays ("Free Speech," March 8). I can assure him that they will make him even more reluctant to start work again.

Years ago I tried not going away on holiday, getting up at the usual hour and busying myself all day in the house and garden. Since then I have extended that idea to cover weekends—and have banished that Monday-morning feeling.

An engine that is continually stopping and starting is less efficient than one which is kept quietly ticking over.—C. JACKSON, Thames Ditton, Surrey.

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EARTHSHAKER

Now the Matabele were thirsting for war; already there were killings in the kraal — and Maria knew that the white women would be next

THE warriors had come almost to the verge of the town. They were waiting for a signal, squatting low in order that their great hoods of ostrich feathers might not be seen above the grass. Across their strong thighs lay the short, broad-bladed spears.

Now a woman came riding from the south, from the old fort. As she entered the town several warriors parted the grass to look after her. Recognizing the horse, a magnificent chestnut stallion, they at once identified the woman; one or two of them grimaced, for they hated Maria Prinsloo.

She trotted through the town and reined in at the market square. The stirrup leathers were long, in the Boer fashion, so that she rode with her fine legs as nearly straight as the massive barrel of the horse would permit. She took off her wide-brimmed hat and flicked pale red dust from it with the loop of her riding crop.

The town was called Victoria. In this July of 1893 it was young, scarcely a year in its present location; but already it seemed to Maria an aged vegetable of a town.

There were twenty-odd brick houses, unadorned, architecturally prosaic; about the same number of plain wooden cottages, some corrugated iron shacks, and a few mean little wattle-and-daub huts made of twigs and branches sustained with dried mud. Around it the yellow African savannah stretched flat and nearly treeless: dry now, but swampy in the rains and a breeding ground of fevers. The gold reefs, the reason for Victoria's existence, lay outside its small straggling boundaries, and most of the men were at work there.

A few white women stood talking in front of the stores; others, their long skirts trailing in the dust, strolled up and down with children. Mashona servants, the nominal owners of the country, moved slowly as they discharged errands, or sprawled dozing against pleasantly heated iron walls.

Out over the veld the chirring call of a honey guide sounded three times. Then, promptly at the third of the vibrant little cries, a man stood up and stepped from the grasses at the edge of town. By chance he was directly in front of Maria, about a hundred yards distant, so that she saw him plainly: on his head an immense bonnet of black ostrich feathers, around his taut and narrow waist a thick kilt of the skins of tiger cats, on calves and upper arms flapping belts of fringed white oxhide. Africa had come over the hills with a vengeance. This was a Matabele soldier, dressed for war.

Then out of the grass leaped a great rush of warriors. They had waited silently, but as they broke cover behind the leader they rattled their spears on the huge black war shields and yelled in sudden rage.

All the women flung into movement, some running towards their houses, others dashing at children and snatching them up, only to halt irresolute as the Matabele charged into the town. The horse Bomvu reared; Maria slashed at the top of his head with her crop, forced him down, turned him towards the attackers.

IF it was to be a massacre, her quickest way to safety would be straight through the nearest rank; that was her first reaction, followed by an anger that wholly routed dismay. She cried out to the warriors in their own tongue, her voice lost in the tumult. "What are you doing here? Get back to your king!" Savagely she forced Bomvu to prance at them.

The Mashona servants had sprung to their feet. Though some carried spears, none stayed to offer fight, but scattered, fearful as hares, stumbling as they went.

Maria saw a towheaded English girl, heavily pregnant, recoil against a hitching rack. The foremost Matabele passed without glancing at her. Hadn't they come to slaughter, then? Impossible; they were bent on death.

Maria leaned sidelong from the saddle to cut viciously at one of them with her crop. He dodged and was gone. She turned her head automatically to watch and saw him spit a running Mashona below the shoulder blade, the assegai's iron point sinking into flesh with a ghastly crunch. Even as Maria clamped her teeth on a surge of dreadful nausea, her years of African experience were telling her that this was a raid on the Mashona people alone; Kaffir against Kaffir, the whites safe from molestation.

Already the lone vulture which hung above the town had dropped much nearer, and more were coming from the north. Maria Prinsloo whirled the neighing horse about the square, as she rode first at one Matabele and then at another, cursing them in the vernacular, trying to beat them off from their victims.

The mass of attackers had spread out, the solid line broken into pairs and trios, some sprinting after the running Mashonas, others baying them in cul-de-sacs and laughing as they stabbed with the short assegais, hissing the death-word *jija! jija!* as they thrust.

Another girl was scuttling across the market place. Maria recognized her friend Olive Cronin. She rode towards her, saw Olive swerve and nearly collide with a group of struggling Kaffirs. As Maria reached her, Olive halted, her sun-bonnet dangling crazily from the side of her head, and gazed down at a splash of blood on her green skirt.

"It isn't your own blood," shouted Maria, bending from the saddle. "Olive, you're all right. Get off the street."

Quickly Maria surveyed the market place. Appallingly lifeless Mashona bodies cluttered the ground and even the stoeps, making gory barriers wherever she turned. Then she saw that where the south road debouched into the square a man was standing at the head of a team of donkeys. He had a heavy rifle and he was the only white man in sight.

"Come on, Olive." Stooping in the saddle to grasp her friend by the shoulder, Maria shoved her across the open space. In a moment they had reached the man.

He was feeding the off leader of his team, giving it shelled mealies from an old sack. He glanced at Olive and then up at Maria, squinting against the sun. He was a stranger to the town.

"I've been waiting," he said quietly, before Maria could speak, "for you to come

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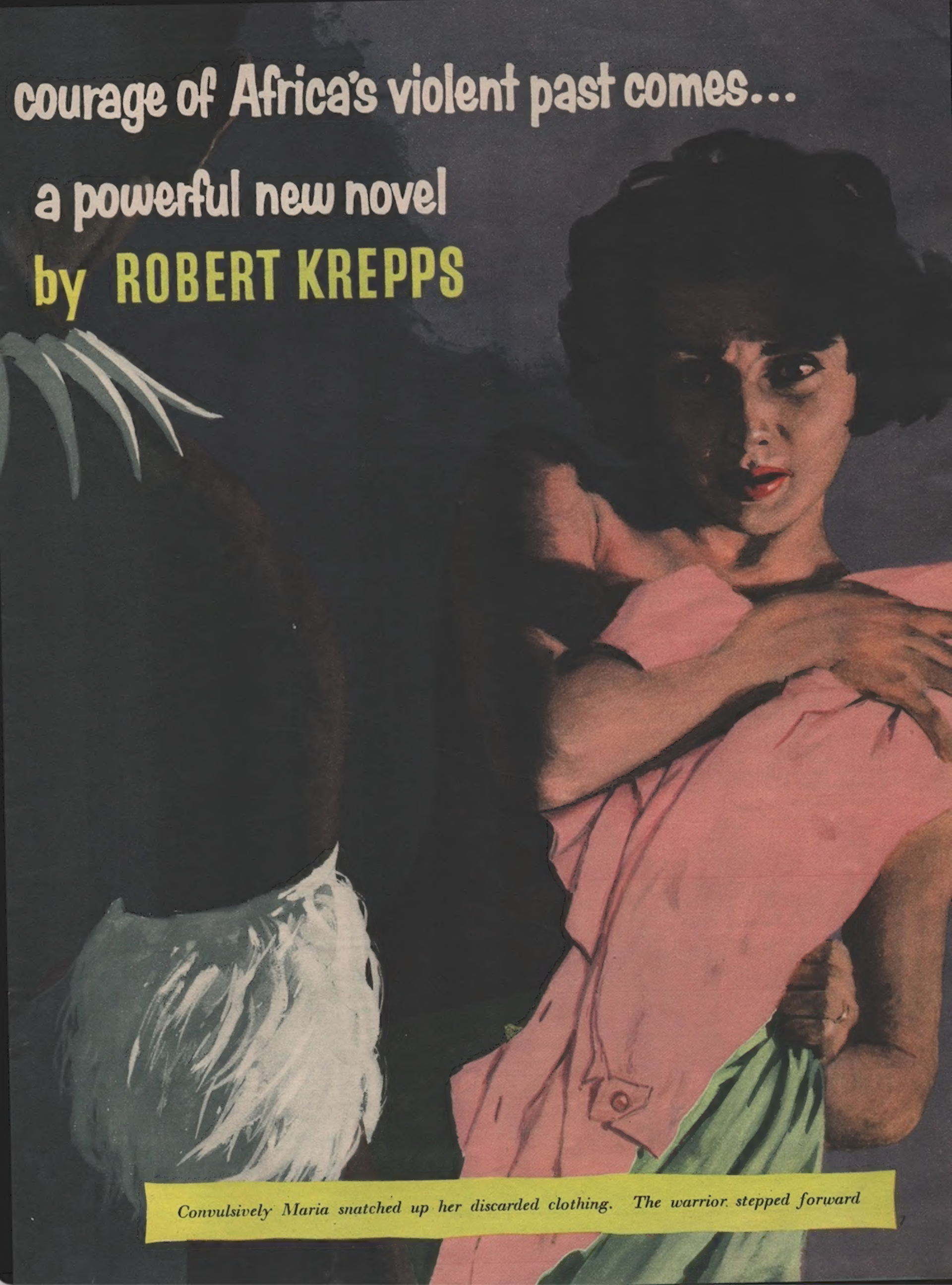
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Convulsively Maria snatched up her discarded clothing. The warrior stepped forward

Earthshaker

continued from page 6

and tell me to mix in. Honest to God, sis, I think it'd be a mistake. I might if you ask me, but I'd rather not."

Maria sat erect in the saddle. "I don't want you to fight," she said. "Will you take care of this girl? She's ill."

Without answering, the man took Olive's hand and led her back to his tall-wheeled vehicle, hoisting her gently up to the open seat. Maria turned her horse away and cantered back into the square.

Other white men had appeared: the butcher, the doctor, a few shopkeepers, and two of the police, these last being mounted. All of them were armed, but did not shoot, only shook their fists and roared angrily, giving orders in English to which no one listened.

The worst of the horror was done, at all events. The invaders had killed every Mashona in sight. They were banding together, talking and clicking their bloody fingers with elation. Maria kneed Bomvu right in among them, looking for the captain.

"Where is Mgandaan?" she shouted to them.

He was abruptly before her, a long venomous snake of a man. "*Sakubona,*" he said, with a humility as patently shammed as his smile. "I see you, woman of Prinsloo."

"I see you, son of a wart hog," Maria said. "When the king hears of this, he will surely feed your flesh to vultures."

"I am only the king's hound," Mgandaan answered. "I do what the king commands. He said to us, 'The Mashonas have stolen my cattle, so go sweetly and teach them that I am king.' And this I have done."

"You are not allowed to come this side of the border," Maria told him angrily.

"Who allows and does not allow the People of the Long Shields to do this and that?" bellowed Mgandaan, immediately flaring up. "Where is the border, and who has made it? I have seen no border between Lobengula and his slaves, the Mashona. The king has seen no border. What is it, and who tells us not to cross?" He scowled at her. "By and by there will be no one to order the people of Lobengula to do or not to do anything."

The warriors muttered ominously. One of the mounted white men rode over near the crowd and said anxiously to Maria: "What are you saying to them, Mrs. Prinsloo?"

"I'm saying they're out of bounds," she snapped. "What do you suppose I'm saying?"

"Don't arouse them. Remember there are only a handful of white men here," he said stiffly.

"And you're a crew of rat-gutted cowards," she retorted, speaking again in the Matabele tongue which he did not understand, so wrought-up that she forgot Mgandaan and his killers standing round her, until they howled with merriment. Then she felt despicable.

"Let us go," Mgandaan cried, his thin belly quivering with mirth. "Let us retreat before the fierce women of this kraal tear us to pieces." They ran in a pack from the town.

Maria gazed at the market square. More than a score of Mashona men lay in grotesque death. Averting her head, Maria sent Bomvu cantering across to the stranger. He was still feeding his donkeys.

"Where's Olive?"

"She threw her lunch over the side," he said. The American idiom was a little hard to follow. "Then a feller came and said he was her husband, so I let him have her. Look here," he went on, when she did not say anything: "I'm sorry I took you up short like that a while back, but I was afraid you'd ask me to fire into the wrong flock. Didn't know whose side I was on. Don't know yet. Who were they?"

"The Matabele," she told him. "They own the country west of here."

"I'd heard that, yes."

"It was a horrible time for you to come to Victoria. I'm afraid all this" —she made a tense, spread-fingered gesture over her shoulder—"is only a start. The Company can't allow them to murder our servants under our noses."

"That would be the British South Africa Company?"

"Yes, it owns Mashonaland."

He tipped back his hat. For the first time she looked at his face. It was profoundly masculine: the skin like brown old buckram.

He took out a wallet and extracted from it a newspaper clipping, tattered and remarkably dirty. Holding it, perhaps without intent, so that she could not read it, he said: "Would the head man of these Matabele be named"— here he paused and peered up at her, his face uncommunicative—"would he be named Lumpemgoola?"

"Lobengula," she corrected.

He looked at the paper again. "The fallibility of the press," he muttered. It seemed to Maria an odd word for him to know. "Thanks," he said, fishing in his pockets. "I'm beholden." When he did not lift his eyes again, she turned Bomvu and trotted towards her house.

The stranger caught hold of the breastband of his off leader's harness and tugged it sharply. The donkey snapped at him; he cuffed it on the nose, and it lurched into motion. It was a vicious beast. The man was unreasonably fond of it, and of all his donkeys had assigned it alone the dignity of a name: Crook.

The man himself was called Gabriel Decker. He was a broad, robust fellow of middle height, about thirty-four or five years old. Under his arm he carried a big English rifle, a Martini-Henry, which was almost brand new. On the seat of his buckboard lay two more guns, a .45-70 Winchester rifle and a sawn-off shotgun. Over this heavy armament crouched a mongrel bull-terrier bitch.

As he hauled his team into the square, Decker looked the town over. Nowhere did he see anything to suggest a booming gold town, and for this he was thankful. He had half expected that the streets would be crowded with swaggering gunmen whose presence might have cramped his style.

Having located the best of the three public houses, Napier's Bar, by instinct, he tied his team to a dead mimosa tree and went inside. No one was there but the bartender.

Decker leaned on the wood and said: "Whisky."

When he had drunk several whiskies, rich smoky stuff out of an old rum cask, Napier's commenced to fill up. The men of Victoria were coming in from the gold reefs. They were angry, though in a way which Decker judged pretty tame considering what had just happened to their town. He reminded himself that they were Britishers, and quieter than ordinary people.

"If we don't retaliate, d'you know what it will be next time?" said a youngster with a mug of bitter ale. "It'll be us with our guts spilled."

"Yus," agreed the bartender weightily, when some of them looked shocked, as if they had not considered that possibility before. "Yus, indeed it will, nor there won't be sparing of the women and chicks neither. I am laying three to one," he went on, leaning on his bar and staring around him. "three to one, gents all, that this here Lobengula has got hisself into a war this time."

"Any limit?" asked a man with a short black beard.

"No limit, Mr. Moran."

"I'll have ten quid on that, then. We won't start a war over a few pipped Mashona."

Decker asked: "If it did come to it, how far would Lobengula have to travel? How far's his home town?"

"What, Bulawayo? About two hundred fifty miles by road. But Jameson's too sharp to go to war over a handful of dead Kaffirs, believe me."

The young man with the mug whacked it down passionately, and roared out a brief coarse word that made Decker feel at home. "Moran, you can't see past the end of your silly nose. Didn't you hear what the captain of that *impi* told the Prinsloo girl?"

"I don't speak their bloody gargle," said Moran. "And I'll thank you not to curse at me, Peters."

"He said it would be our turn by and by. And that's why Jameson will sit on Lobengula, Moran, and I will lay you five to one on it."

The intense Anglo-Saxon devotion for a wager overcame them both. Decker ceased to exist for them. As he left the bar-room, they were shaking hands to seal the bet, Peters gay and Moran quite testy and formal. The place was full of din and Decker hated to abandon it now; but he had a great deal to think over.

He hired a room, stabled his team, and walked about the streets, listening to Victoria all abuzz with indignation. He had an impulsive desire to rush headlong on his way, being so close to the biggest deal of his life. Two hundred and fifty miles! No wonder he was restless.

Why, he hadn't fretted like this even when that miserable disaster had smote him, north-east of Nogales, and ruined his career in a matter of minutes, as well as forcing him eventually to get out of the States.

He was scouting for Colonel Stanford Ede, a grey and quiet man sent out from Washington to see why the Yaqui Indians had come up from Sonora into Arizona. Decker led him, with a half-troop of cavalry, into a *coulée*; he'd reconnoitred it and would have taken his solemn oath there were no Indians there. Yet a great mob of them helled into sight and there was a short, fierce battle; after which Decker and Ede, with a few dozen survivors, were hauled to the chief.

The Yaqui chieftain grinned and said in Mexican: "'*Dias*, Decker, how are you?" and had him unleashed and told him in a friendly way to dust out. Decker wouldn't have gone, except that he hoped he could bring the rest of the troop on to them before they'd done much to Ede. He found the captain and his boys in half an hour; they bottled up the Yaquis and at sundown there wasn't a live Indian north of the border.

A few of the prisoners were still able to use their tongues, though Colonel Ede was lying on his back, his belly hollowed out and filled with sand, and a barrel cactus planted in the centre. Decker saw that and prudently cantered his horse away through the twilight. If he'd stayed two minutes he would have been a dead man.

He went to Texas. There he found that the Rangers had been alerted, so he travelled on. There wasn't a way in the world, nor ever would be, for him to prove that he wasn't guilty of sucking Ede and the cavalry into a planned ambush.

Decker went home to Wisconsin to hole up and scheme. There he found old Sam, his father, dying of consumption. He sat with the old farmer during the weeks it took him to choke away his life, sometimes telling lies to please him, often reading aloud from the enormous stacks of newspapers Sam had collected in the unused second bedroom.

One day, in glancing down the columns of a paper, he saw an item headed *Treasure in Africa*. When his father fell asleep, Gabe snooped around the house, looking for a stack of books he'd left there when he ran away. They were about Africa and India and other tropical lands, and he had a sudden desire to read them again.

At last in a corner of the cellar he found his little deal chest, repository of his childhood possessions. Grinning with recognition, he opened the lid; the books weren't there. Sam must have thrown them away or sold them.

He turned the chest upside down, and a collection of dried mouse droppings fell on the packed earth floor. Something rolled towards him, and he slapped his hand over it and picked it up. Though he hadn't seen it in nearly twenty years, it had a familiar feel. He carried it to the kitchen, recalling that on the day he'd stuffed his pockets with food before escaping to the Navajos, he'd spent an hour hunting for it. It was his lucky gold piece.

He looked at it in the light of the fading day. It was tarnished brass, and had a square hole in the centre. *Doggone*, he thought, absurdly disappointed, *I always figured it was genuine gold*. Around the edge of the hole in raised letters it said *William*

continued on page 29

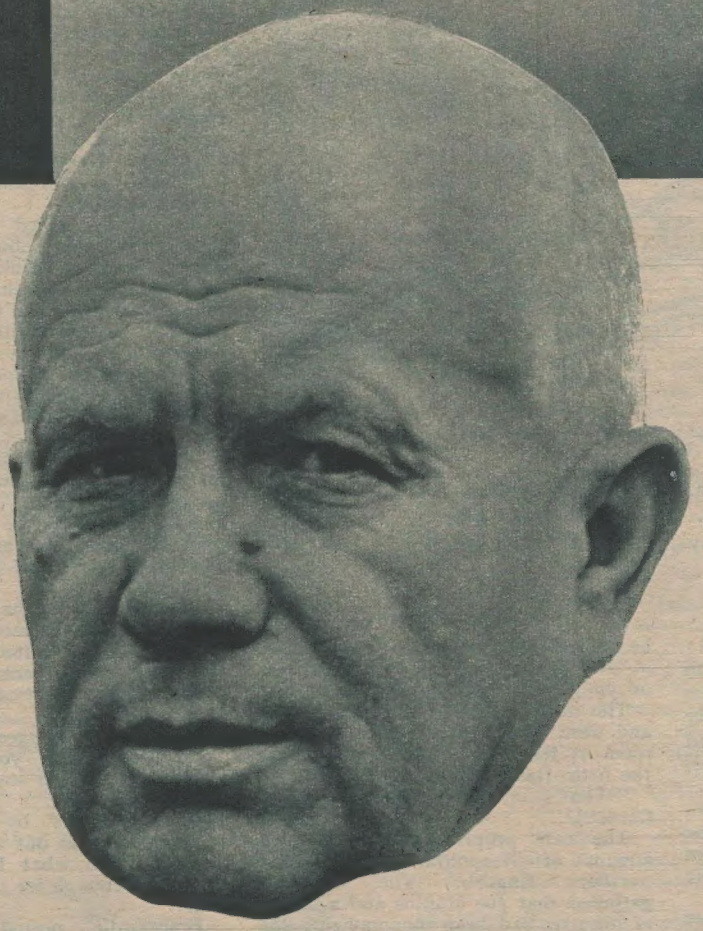
Only Maria had fought the killers. Now she eyed the stranger grimly. "Didn't know whose side I was on," he explained

Can NATO protect us today?

by Captain B. H. LIDDELL HART

Nato delegates meet in Paris. On the front row are Foster Dulles (left) and Selwyn Lloyd (fifth)

On Nato's tenth birthday fifteen nations defy Khruschev. But is it a dangerous bluff? asks a famous strategist



NATO is ten years old. It was born on April 4, 1949, when the North Atlantic Treaty was signed in Washington by the representatives of twelve countries. Eight of these starters were on the European mainland—France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxemburg, Italy, Portugal, Denmark and Norway. The others were Britain, Iceland, Canada and the United States. Three more countries have joined this collective defence "club" since then—Greece and Turkey in 1952; Federal Germany in 1955.

Nato was the offspring of the Berlin crisis—the Soviet blockade of West Berlin, maintained for eleven months, and foiled only by the large-scale and sustained Allied air lift that was organized to meet the emergency. The Korean crisis of 1950 produced a further spur, and the creation of a Supreme Headquarters for the Allied Powers in Europe—Shape.

The North Atlantic Treaty specified in Article 12 that after it had been in force for ten years it should be reviewed, at the request of any member-state, in "regard to the factors then affecting peace and security." Article 13, however, laid down that only after twenty years could any member-state withdraw from the treaty.

It is certainly desirable that there should be a review of the treaty, its value and effectiveness, in the light of ten years' experience and present conditions. A new Berlin crisis is looming.

Up goes the cost

A review of Nato must start with the question of its value in comparison to cost up to the present time. Militarily, the product has been very poor —appallingly small for the outlay. The creation of Nato can be justified only on less tangible and testable grounds.

Since 1949 the member-countries have spent an immensely increased amount of money on defence. For the countries in Western Europe alone it has risen to £4,000 million a year, of which Britain has been contributing more than £1,500 million

Despite this vast expenditure, the Nato "shield force" covering the heart of Europe has fallen far short of the minimum defensive strength that was considered essential when Shape plans were framed. It has never provided a hopeful chance of effective and prolonged defence against a major attack by Russian forces.

The spur to the creation of Nato ten years ago, during the Berlin crisis, was a realization that if the Russians were to advance westward they could swamp the Western powers' ground defences.

They had about thirty divisions poised in occupied territory behind the Iron Curtain, and more than a hundred available to draw upon in European Russia, supported by some six thousand aircraft—whereas the Western powers, since demobilizing, had in all only about fourteen divisions on the Continent, and these were far from a state of readiness for action, while they had less than a thousand aircraft.

Yet now, after ten years of building up Nato, there is still no adequate defence against any major attack on the main front in Central Europe.

The Russians maintain almost as many active divisions as they did before—twenty in East Germany, eight in other satellite countries and about a hundred in European Russia. Moreover, all the divisions in the forward areas, and many of those behind, have been entirely re-equipped with post-war types of weapons and amply provided with mechanized transport.

By contrast, the Nato forces on the central front have been built up to a strength of barely twenty divisions, and that total includes the seven West German divisions that have now been formed. Of this meagre total, only the five American divisions are at full strength and immediately ready for action. The British, now reduced to the equivalent of three, are the next best in strength and readiness. The Belgian (two) and Netherlands (one) divisions suffer from larger deficiencies.

France lags behind

The worst deficiency is on the part of the French—who originally undertook to contribute twenty divisions, half of them in a state of immediate readiness, but now have only two on the spot, incomplete and unready. That is largely, although not wholly, due to the drain of the war in Algeria.

In sum, the military effort of the Nato countries has been a very bad lapse from the original Shape plan, approved at the 1952 Nato conference in Lisbon, of building up a ground force of ninety divisions, nearly sixty of them for the central front.

The great deficiency in number of divisions is multiplied by many defects of organization. The existing divisions vary in size, mobility, equipment and weapon-power. The time required for mobilization in the different national armies varies from three to forty-five days. The difference in types of weapon, types of vehicles, and supply systems are a great handicap to strategic flexibility. It is hard to imagine such a mixed force maintaining a long resistance, if also heavily outnumbered.

As for Nato's northern flank, in Norway and Denmark, this is much weaker still. There is virtually no defence there against a strong surprise

continued on page 33

Bracegirdle

by THURMAN

ILLUSTRATED BY

Following a hunch, Bracegirdle called on Joe's ex-girl friend. "Nobody gives him a good word these days," he said. "Can you?"

INSPECTOR BRACEGIRDLE said: "Break it up." He eyed the heavy, watchful youth whose hand was moving down slowly to the pin-table coin slot. "I said break it up, Mullins. Get outside. The lot of you."

"You hear what the inspector tella you?" Carnelli said, leaning across the counter. "You get outside, you boys and girls. I don't wanta no trouble in here."

"What are you going to charge me with?" Mullins asked, brushing back his shock of hair.

"Nothing, so long as you get out," Bracegirdle said. "If you don't, you'll be causing an obstruction, and your behaviour might lead to a breach of the peace."

"You're nuts!" Mullins said derisively. "There's no law against it if I stay around till closing-time." He shot a glance at the dozen others, packed tightly behind his back. "Never let a cop scare you," he told them.

"Feel better after that, Mullins?" Bracegirdle kept his patience well. "Go on home and sleep it off. . . . No, not the rest of you. Sergeant, see him off the premises. To make sure he goes the right way, take him home in the car. When they've gone, Bradley, stand by the door and don't let anyone out for ten minutes. I want a word with Carnelli."

Sergeant Strake jerked a stubby thumb towards the door. "Come on, you!"

With exaggerated nonchalance, Joe Mullins stalked ahead of him, a slightly ridiculous figure in tight red trousers and tight raindrop jacket. At the door he turned and looked at Bracegirdle.

"One of these times, cop, I'll get you on your own. That'll be the day!"

The inspector lifted the counter-flap and went with Carnelli into the little room at the back. "He means that," the little Italian said.

"What's been the trouble, Carnelli?"

The café proprietor broke into a stream of Neapolitan mixed with northern English. The inspector gathered that Joe Mullins and a crowd of his pals had been monopolizing the pin-table since five o'clock. All on the square, Carnelli said, but no profit to him. They were smart, those boys. Girls too—that black-haired one Mullins had his arm around was a no-gooda lot. Replay after replay.

WHAT troubled Carnelli was that his café, a respectable sausage-and-mash pull-up for long-distance drivers, was being turned into a rowdy teenage dive.

"You told the sergeant they'd threatened you."

"Plenty," Carnelli said. "They tell me they slitta my throat, smash up the joint."

"I've known Joe Mullins seven years," Bracegirdle said thoughtfully, "ever since he came to Holtrigg. Half Irish. I've had a lot of trouble with him. Only last week I was talking to Father Clancy about him, but there's precious little he can do. I wouldn't worry about his threats, though. It's just big talk."

"Big talk, eh? Only last week, they nearly killa the old woman."

"I'm not sure about that," Bracegirdle said.

The old woman, a Mrs. Barnes, kept a coffee and hot-dog stall on a corner of waste ground bordered by three of Holtrigg's many pubs. A miniature riot after closing-time had left her kicked and half-conscious behind the stall, with the shoe-box-till empty and her stock scattered about the road.

"I don't see any Holtrigg types vicious enough to do that," the inspector went on. "It was Race Week, remember. A trick like that smells more like the louts who drift in from the big towns. Northfield among them."

"I say it was Mullins," Carnelli persisted doggedly.

Bracegirdle asked for a cup of coffee. It was snowing again and bitterly cold. Drinking the coffee, he thought over what Carnelli had said. Carnelli wasn't the only one who had blamed Mullins for what had happened. So did the chief constable, according to the grape-vine. And the super in Northfield, who had been a thorn in Bracegirdle's flesh for many years.

"If you see anything of Mullins or his gang again, don't wait for trouble," he advised Carnelli. "Give me a ring, and I'll send Strake or Bradley along to play the juke box and drink coffee. That'll do the trick—they don't like uniforms."

Bradley had let the rest of them go by the time the inspector came back to the café. They waited for Strake and the car. Going back to town, they passed Mullins's straggling, jean-clad army.

"Scum!" the sergeant muttered.

"You'd change your mind about that if another war started tomorrow," Bracegirdle said. "Did you tuck Mullins up in bed, by the way?"

"I tipped him out at his front door and told him what I thought about him, loud enough for the neighbours to hear."

Bracegirdle peered through the flurrying snow. "What's your idea about old Mrs. Barnes, Strake?"

"Mullins did it," Strake said. "There's going to be more trouble, you see."

And there was. Strake reported it next morning, while Bracegirdle was shaving.

"Sorry to bother you, sir," he said, "but Carnelli's had a break-in."

Bracegirdle had not yet eaten. He was standing by the telephone in his draughty hall, with lather caking on his face. It wasn't a good start to the day.

"He got me on the blower an hour ago, sir," Strake went on. "Thought I'd pop down and take a look before I disturbed your beauty-sleep."

"What did you find?"

"Back door bust in, sir. Nothing taken out of the till because there was nothing in. Few packets of cigarettes taken, that's about all."

"Did you check the pin-table?" Bracegirdle asked. "Those things hold a lot of money."

"Hadn't been touched, sir. I checked the juke-box too."

"Get on to Mullins," the inspector said. "Find out what he was doing last night after you drove him home."

An hour later, the sergeant, a disgusted expression on his face, met Bracegirdle at the police station.

"Went straight to bed, sir," he said. "So I asks him how long he stayed there before he got up again and bust into Carnelli's, and he gives me that deadpan look and says I'm the clever cop, so why not tell him? Lives with an aunt, sir. . . ."

"I know that."

"She went to bed before Joe and didn't get up till he'd gone to work. That's where I found him—driving a crane. They pay good folding money for a job like that, sir."

"How far from his home to Carnelli's?"

"Say a mile. . . . If you're thinking about footprints in the snow, forget it, sir. It's still snowing. Next thing, we'll be getting a mercy call for some poor brave hikers at the mercy of the elements on Blackwinter, and that'll just about put the tin hat on it."

OFF Bracegirdle went to Carnelli's place to see for himself. Then, back in town, his first call was at a chainstore in High Street, where he bought an unwanted packet of envelopes. The pleasant, auburn-haired girl avoided looking at him as she gave him his change.

"You're Moira Kelly," he said conversationally. "Do you still attend St. Joseph's, Moira?"

"You know Father Clancy," she said. "Ask him."

"Why doesn't Joe Mullins go there any more?"

"I guess he's got too big."

The inspector nodded. "You're probably right. Good job—twelve or fifteen pounds a week. Six foot of

These youngsters their own youth One perceptive it — and

and the teenagers

WARRINER

EDWIN PHILLIPS

him, thirteen stones. Why did you drop him, Moira?"

"I wouldn't want a cheap thug, however big he was."

Bracegirdle pocketed his change. "Nobody," he said, "gives him a good word these days. Can you?"

She shook her head. "No."

"They say he beat up Mrs. Barnes."

"He says he didn't."

"So you've been talking to him?"

A bright flush coloured her fresh young face. She turned away to serve another customer, and Bracegirdle thoughtfully lit his pipe. "Naturally," he said, when the customer had gone, "Mullins would deny it, but. . . ."

"He doesn't tell lies," she said.

"So there's some good in him?"

"It isn't that. He thinks he's big. He'd rather brag about what he'd done and go to prison than go free by lying."

That gave Bracegirdle something to think about. He mulled it over on his way back to the police station. It was still on his mind when he pushed open the station door to find Sergeant Strake standing with finger on lip.

"Keep your hat on straight, sir," he said. "The chief cop's warming his patent leather toes inside."

Bracegirdle knew Fothergill well. He and the chief constable were personal friends, which gave the unannounced visit a menacing flavour. Fothergill wouldn't have driven over in weather like this just to have a drink with him.

YET they did have a drink, using the weather as an excuse. Then Bracegirdle rang up his wife and said there would be one extra for lunch. He put the phone down, pushed his feet towards the fire, and looked ironically at Fothergill.

"Before we go over and tackle the dumplings," he said, "let's have it, sir, who's been complaining—Northfield?"

"You had a little trouble here last night, Bracegirdle."

"And I was on the spot this morning."

"There's that other affair, too. . . . They don't like the way you've passed the baby."

"You mean they don't like the way I handle things here, sir. They'd like me to pull somebody in. I've given them a lot of information about who was in Holtrigg that day. Car numbers, for instance. It's a big job checking. Well, they've a lot of people to do it."

Fothergill shook his head. "You've a genius for doing things the wrong way round, Bracegirdle. Why haven't you got Mullins under lock and key?"

"Because, from that point on, Mullins will have to be kept under lock and key for the rest of his life."

"But you can't afford to let yourself be pushed around by a bunch of teenagers, man! You don't realize. . . ."

Bracegirdle exploded. He took a savage kick at the logs on the fire. "I don't *realize*?" he said. "I'm afraid of them, sir. I've had thieves and thugs to deal with and one or two murderers for makeweight, but they've never got under my skin the way these kids do. I push my way past them outside the Roxall dance place on a Sunday night, and get the feeling that if I tread on one of their toes they'll turn on me in a mass. They're drunk with their own youth and strength."

Fothergill shifted uneasily in the leather chair. "Damn it all, we weren't like that in our day," he said irritably.

"I agree, sir. But why weren't we?" The chief constable's eyebrows went

Bracegirdle sprawled on the floor. He saw the murder in Joe's eyes as his torch swung up . . .

were drunk with and strength. policeman knew was afraid

GILBERT HARDING TALKS ABOUT...

Super schools— and threadbare teachers

At this time of the year the Chancellor talks in millions — your money and mine. If you have children of school age you will, no doubt, note with some satisfaction the many millions he proposes to spend upon education.

It is the government's declared intention to spend about £400 million on bringing our schools up to date.

Fine! Nobody could be more pleased than I am. That seems much more sensible than spending millions upon trying to find out about the backside of the moon. But is the Ministry of Education (and, more important, are we) going to get our money's worth?

This programme will mean the end of the remaining School Board buildings left over from the last century, schools more like dreary chapels, sunless, depressing places that should have gone long ago.

Expense to come

We shall have all sorts of impressive things: more glass-box classrooms, fine workshops and laboratories, cinema projectors and magnificent assembly halls with excellent stages and lighting equipment for plays. The lot.

When I hear of all these expensive things to come, I am reminded of the two small boys I once heard about. Usually, I loathe the bright sayings of other people's brats, but I do happen to collect knock-down retorts from any source.

Said one little boy, boasting: "*We've* got a telephone and a fridge and a television. You haven't got much, have you?" To which the other replied: "I've got manners."

The schools of today have so much and are going to have more. The sorely tried men and women who taught me, some forty-five years ago, would goggle at it all.

They certainly did not have much —name-carved, ancient desks, sometimes two- and three-seaters; only thin partitions between huge classes of sixty or more. But I can hear them saying scornfully, "We *did* teach!"

I wish I felt that the quality of your children's education was at least keeping pace with the rising material standards.

I had a depressing encounter, a few weeks ago, with a couple of fifteen-year-old grammar schoolboys who came to interview me at my house in Brighton to fill up a page or two of their school magazine.

After answering their questions over tea and cake, I decided to ask them a few. Who was the Home Secretary? They had not the slightest idea. Our ruler in 1890? A king, they thought. They could not answer the simplest questions; they excused themselves by pleading that they were "on the science side."

Poor, baffled boffins! They might not have been typical, though I fear that they were.

But my certainty that the quality of education is not keeping pace with the cost is based upon something a lot firmer than mere prejudice, or that single, sorry encounter. I do not blame the teachers. Our official sense of values is horribly wrong.

Everybody can see, and be mightily impressed by, luxurious cloakrooms, huge bicycle sheds and acres of playing-fields. These are not to be despised, but they are, to be blunt, educational bull.

How about first things first? After all, what matters most is what teachers teach, what manner of men and women those teachers are with whom your children probably spend more time than they do with you.

Teachers everywhere badly need a boost to their morale. A salary rise, and a good one, would do a power of good, but a feeling that their status had gone up, too, would help enormously.

There is a down-at-heel, threadbare, "I'm going to get out of this soon," air about too many teachers, and it goes badly with the splendour of their setting. Particularly the men. I feel that some of them are depressed, not stimulated, by the Ritzy schools in which they teach.

Teachers' hutches

The contrast between the tobacco-smoke-ridden hutches of common rooms, where thirty or more teachers are meant to mark books and (very occasionally) relax, and the amenities there are in rich profusion for their pupils has often struck me as monstrous.

You cannot have good teaching—or your money's worth in education —when teachers feel resentful, under-paid and under-appreciated.

They know that their work is important; they would not stick the poor pay if they did not. But politicians, and some parents, do not seem to think so.

If you are not sure, just think for a minute. What do you remember most of your schooldays? Your teachers, good and bad, I am sure.

I remember "my" Miss Groom, at a school in Hereford, where we paid 6d. a week in fees; she made a big impression upon me. I met her again a few years ago. I was chastened to find that she had no recollection of me at all. THE END

Bracegirdle and the teenagers

continued from previous page

up. "I'll tell you, sir," Bracegirdle went on. "*Teenage* wasn't even a word when I'd have qualified for it. I'd a spotty face and a growth of down on it and nobody took me seriously. I earned thirty bob a week and turned in a pound of it to my mother. All I wanted was to grow out of an uncomfortable phase."

"I could say pretty well the same for myself," Fothergill admitted.

"But nowadays they *are* taken seriously, sir. They're earning big money. And they spend it. So Big Business plugs it into them a hundred times a day that they're the salt of the earth."

Fothergill looked at Bracegirdle curiously. "You feel pretty strongly about this, don't you?"

"Pretty strongly, sir. I'd like to put the blame in the right quarter. But all I can do is deal with what happens in my own backyard—and that's Holtrigg and the countryside round about. And I'd like to deal with it in my own way." He glanced up as Sergeant Strake looked in. "Well?"

"Sorry to add to your troubles, sir," Strake said, "but there's another party of boys and girls in jeans kicking up trouble of a different sort. Three of them. Started to walk over Ghyll Banks last night. Warden of the Hostel's been on the blower. One of them got through as far as there for help. There's a lot of snow about."

Bracegirdle nodded. "I've been expecting that. Tell Bradley. I'll go and get outside a good meal first."

WHEN Fothergill had gone, friendly, but still sounding a warning note, Bracegirdle sat back in his chair, gazing at the wall-map. Ghyll Banks was the highest ridge of the Blackwinter moors, and Bracegirdle was short-staffed. Bradley was on night duty and he couldn't fetch him out of bed. Strake would have to stay put. Which left the inspector himself.

He frowned at the map. What he needed was somebody tough; somebody—the thought suddenly occurred to him—like Mullins.

Like Mullins. . . . Well, why not?

Bracegirdle found Mullins in Parker's billiards room. He was leaning across the table with his cue on the rest. Half a dozen of the youths who had been in Carnelli's with him were sprawled on a horsehair bench against the wall. They saw Bracegirdle first, and one of them whistled to Mullins. He turned round, lit a thin cigarette, and flicked the match towards the inspector.

"Bet you've never been in here before," he said.

"Not since before you were born, Joe." Bracegirdle took a couple of steps forward. "I want you."

"Then come and get me."

"Not that way, so don't stand like Buckskin Joe shooting it out with the sheriff. I want your help. Couple of youngsters lost up on Ghyll Banks, and I'm short of staff."

Joe stared at him. He picked up the cue and chalked it. "You're kidding," he said. "Or you're daft."

Bracegirdle shook his head. "You've been telling me for a long time what a big man you are. Now you've a chance to show me."

Nobody spoke. The tables shone with a soft green glow, making the fading daylight seem sickly yellow. The inspector glanced at his watch and turned to the door. He was opening it when Joe Mullins spoke. Softly.

"I'll take you on," he said.

Bracegirdle nodded. "The car's outside."

Mullins glowered at the others, then at Bracegirdle. He slouched arrogantly through the door and let it slam back in the inspector's face. He got into the car. When they came to the police station, Bracegirdle told him to wait, and hurried up the steps.

Then came the anti-climax. Sergeant Strake had news for him that took the wind out of his sails. All that was left of his neat little plan to give Mullins his chance was a laugh. A horse-laugh.

But he wouldn't let it go as easily as that. His mouth set in a trap-like line. "In that case," he told Strake, "I can use the time for something else. I want your coat and boots, Strake."

"Leave me the fire and you can take my trousers as well," Strake said. "What's the idea, sir?"

"I'll tell you later."

Back in the car, Bracegirdle dropped the coats, boots, and a couple of rubber-covered torches on Joe's knees. "We'll call at Carnelli's for a packet of sandwiches and some cakes of chocolate," he said.

JOE MULLINS didn't get out at Carnelli's. He was staring straight in front of him when Bracegirdle came back.

"You'd better get into those boots, Joe," Bracegirdle said. "I reckon I can get the car as far as Ghyll Farm. How well do you know the moor?"

"I don't."

"Ghyll Cairn is nineteen hundred feet up. That's where the track crosses. A mile this side, there's a hut. Anybody hamstrung up there in this weather makes for the hut if he can. We'll try there first."

They left the car at the top of the farm lane, and that was the beginning of the nightmare. It was two-thirty when they set off. At seven, two snow-crusted figures in a world of white darkness, they were still a mile from the hut.

They sheltered behind a turf butt, wolfing the sandwiches, and Bracegirdle took a flask from his pocket. "You'd better have a nip," he said.

Joe grunted, took the nip, lit a cigarette.

"Want to talk?" Bracegirdle asked.

"What about?"

"Anything. Your pals. Carnelli's break-in. The old woman with the hot-dog stall. That Irish girl—what's her name?"

"I don't want to talk about anything," Joe growled.

NOW Bracegirdle was tired, but he had the right kind of toughness. He deliberately steered Joe Mullins towards Ghyll Edge, where the snow was piled shoulder-high by the north-easter that shrieked along the gritstone crags. He saw Joe floundering. He watched Joe grimly, playing him like a fish. When at last they came to the hut, he kicked open the door.

"Nobody here," he said.

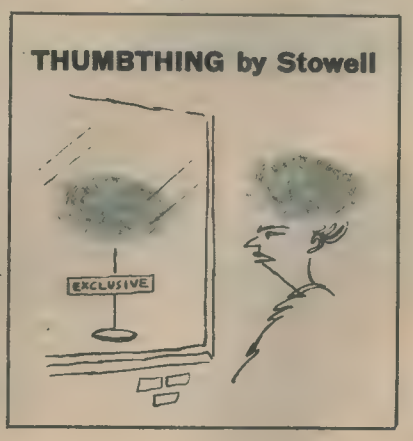
"So what do we do? Where next?"

Bracegirdle waited till Joe was inside. "Nowhere," he said. "We'll have a rest."

The place was half-full of powdery snow that had drifted under the door and through the broken window. Bracegirdle switched on both torches and pushed the barrels into the miniature drift, lighting the place with an eerie glow. He kicked a box across.

"I've fooled you, Joe," he said quietly. "Those kids were picked up

continued on page 24



Every day the noise grows louder, in town and village, on mountainsides and jungle paths. Wherever you are you can't help hearing . . .

The putter of tiny wheels

by ANTHONY HANCOX

BRITAIN'S first sophisticated scooters, with a covered-in appearance, were imported in 1951, and many people regarded them as expensive novelties. By 1953 sales totalled only six thousand, but each year since they have multiplied. In 1956 the total reached 80,000 The next year sales doubled that number. There are now 250,000 scooters in this country.

Forty firms now offer fifty models, twenty of them British. Recently one foreign maker offered a silver cup for the European distributor who sold the most machines. It was won easily by a British distributor.

Scooters have some wealthy enthusiasts, especially in cities where there is bad traffic congestion. Lord Rendlesham rides a scooter in London, and is managing director of a scooter firm. Sir Frederick Hoare, head of Britain's last family bank, rides a scooter four and a half miles from his St. John's Wood home to his City office, although he owns two cars.

Pounding the beat

Scooters have appeared at Ascot, with riders in grey toppers and morning dress. A London brewery has thirty scooters for its travellers.

Nurses of the South London District Nursing Association, riding scooters instead of bicycles, have increased the number of daily visits to patients from twenty to thirty. The Methodist Home Missions department has given 114 ministers scooters so that they can make more visits to isolated country churches.

For police forces, scooters are helping to solve the manpower problem. Liverpool police, four hundred men short, have 154 machines, some with radio.

One scooter patrol covers a beat formerly done by two bicycles. One night a scooter patrolman, answering a burglar alarm call, arrived at a factory ahead of patrol cars and arrested a burglar as he tried to escape.

One scooter manufacturer claims 119 scooter clubs in Britain, with five thousand members, a fifth of whom are women. In the past three years there have been 110 "scooter weddings" between club members.

Veteran motor-cyclists were aghast in 1957 when a three-day international scooter rally was held at the Isle of Man and scooters "puttered" slowly round the famous TT course for the first time. During the rally, Britain's first scooter queen was chosen, Marianne Foster, a twenty-one year old Coventry typist.

Afterwards it was found that the new queen could not ride a scooter.

"We are wondering how much the increased popularity of scooters has contributed to a considerable increase in accidents," says a traffic expert of the Metropolitan Police.

The Ministry of Transport's latest accident figures showed a rise of 11.8 per cent under the heading of motor-cycles. No separate figures have been kept for scooters; they have always been included with motor-cycles.

"Now we have begun to keep a separate watch on scooter accidents," says the expert. "Preliminary figures show that a fifth of the motor-cycle accidents in London in fact concern scooters."

One scooter garage in London is dealing with thirty accident repairs a week. At one time last summer a hire firm had ten of its thirty scooters out of action because of accidents.

"Some people treat them as playthings and do not realize that they must learn to ride them properly," says a member of the firm. In Italy, the home of the modern scooter, there are now a million scooters. In 1956 there were 45,500 scooter accidents.

Some of these accidents were caused by pillion passengers riding side-saddle in the Continental style. "Riding with both legs on one side endangers the balance of a machine," say traffic officials. "It is also distracting."

In Switzerland a regulation was introduced which made side-saddle riding illegal. Women pillion riders in Zurich held an angry protest meeting and declared that the regulation was "an attempt to curb our sex appeal," but the new ruling remained in force.

In London last June a Tottenham man was summoned for allowing his wife to ride side-saddle on the pillion of his scooter, a contravention of the Road Traffic Act which requires any person on a two-wheeled vehicle to sit astride. The man admitted the offence. He added that his wife was wearing slacks. The case was dismissed.

Scooter owners never tire of trying to prove that their machines will go almost anywhere. David Chevalier, a nineteen-year-old Londoner, tried to ride a scooter 3,300 miles round the coastline of Britain in seven days. He had two crashes and failed to set up his "record" by six hours.

£88 world tour

Wim Dussel, of Holland, went round the world on £88 worth of fuel, covering 22,000 miles. A Frenchman, Georges Monneret, fitted his scooter with floats and crossed the Channel. Geoffrey Parker, of Edinburgh, rode his scooter 4,406 feet up Ben Nevis.

Last July natives living near to the River Okano in French Equatorial Africa heard a strange "putter-putter" noise coming along a narrow jungle track. They were startled to see a man ride up on a scooter; it was the first they had seen.

The rider, John Anton-Smith, a Cambridge student, explained that he was with an expedition which was catching spiders and rare birds. After a few days of hunting, Anton-Smith crashed the scooter into a rock and abandoned it in the jungle.

Scooter organizations claim that foreign travel by scooter fosters international friendship. Khruschev nearly got a friendly letter from a scooter owner not long ago. The Russian leader personally authorized the granting of a visa to Olabisi Ajala, a Nigerian student in London, so that he could include Russia in his scooter tour.

Later, when Khruschev was visiting East Berlin, a man tried to force his way through the line of bodyguards. He was immediately knocked down and seized as a would-be assassin.

The man was Ajala, who was trying to hand Khruschev a note thanking him for the visa. THE END

A quarter of a million scooters are now on Britain's roads. Riders have climbed to the top of Ben Nevis and crossed the Channel on floats

Round and about with the 'Little Red Vans'

KING'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE: *Illustrated by Hugh Chevins*

They're very well informed in Cambridge

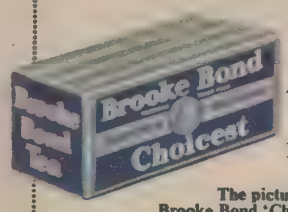
The Romans built Via Devana, their highway, to Chester, through Cambridge. Sacked by the Danes, rebuilt by Canute, Grantanbrycge, as the Saxons knew Cambridge, had 400 houses in Edward the Confessor's time, some being destroyed by the Conqueror when in 1068 he rebuilt the castle against Hereward the Wake, last leader of the English resistance movement.

In 1388, Richard II held Parliament there, and it was in Cambridge, that the Duke of Northumberland proclaimed Lady Jane Grey as Queen, switching in favour of Mary Tudor a few days later—but too late to save his head.

University life in Cambridge began about 1200; and the people of Cambridge, sensitive to their heritage of culture, appreciate quality in all things. Indeed, what else could explain why the little red Brooke Bond vans are seen so regularly day after day delivering—not only to Cambridge, but to all the county—good tea and FRESH.

Brooke Bond have thousands of acres of their own tea gardens—more than any other firm of tea distributors in the world—with their own buyers in all the big world tea markets.

More and more people are enjoying Brooke Bond—good tea and *fresh*. Over 150 million cups of Brooke Bond tea are drunk *every day* throughout the world.



BROOKE BOND 'CHOICEST'

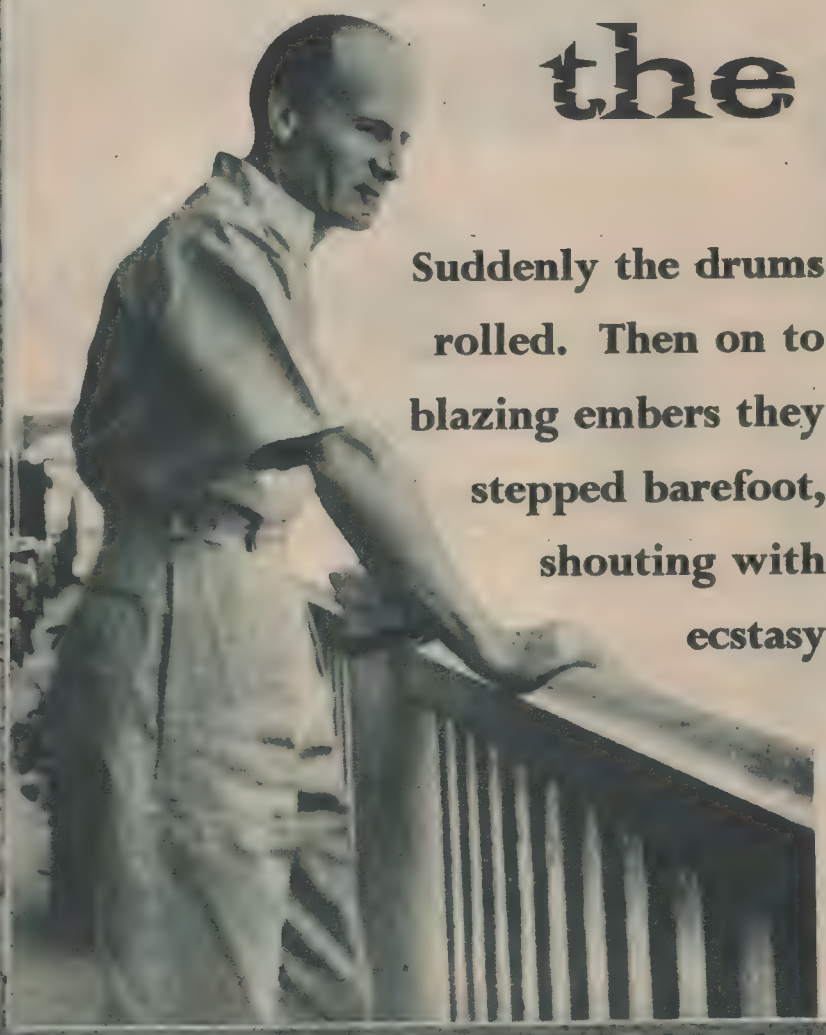
A blend of finest Ceylon and Assam teas as used in the Brooke Bond boardroom.

The picture cards enclosed in packets of Brooke Bond 'Choicest', Edglets and P.G. Tips have great interest and educational value.

Brooke Bond *GOOD TEA—AND FRESH!*

A dramatic book extract: The amazing rituals of the fire-walkers

I learn the secrets of the pit of fire



Suddenly the drums rolled. Then on to blazing embers they stepped barefoot, shouting with ecstasy

by GEORGE SANDWITH

HAD I not seen the fire-walking preparations with my own eyes, I would never have believed them. It was an August afternoon in 1951. The High Priest from the Maha Devi temple near Suva, Fiji, and about thirty other fire-walkers of all ages —handsome, virile men, old women, youths and even children—were gathered on the banks of the sacred Samambula Creek.

After they had completed the rite of total immersion in the creek, the High Priest donned a yellow robe. Next he picked up one of several small, needle-sharp tridents, each about a foot long and made of white wood. A hush fell on the crowd of Indian and Fijian on-lookers as he used the trident to anoint his face, arms and body with red paint. The rest of the fire-walkers followed his example.

"The paint has as much significance as holy water," whispered an Indian spectator at my side.

Then the High Priest and his men stood in a circle round a sacred pot called the *khalasam*. They began to chant, softly at first. The chanting gathered momentum until it culminated in a triumphal shout.

What happened next left me dumb-founded.

The High Priest thrust the single-pointed end of a trident right into the cheek of a young fire-walker. It went between the man's teeth and out through his other cheek.

The man did not wince, nor was there any sign of bleeding.

Two more tridents—three in all—pierced his face. But there was more to come.

A low gasp arose from the spectators as skewers were inserted through the fleshy parts of the man's arms, chest and body, and strong wire was threaded through his side, piercing the flesh here and there as it coiled round his trunk. Again, there was no bleeding.

The High Priest stood apart while many of the fire-walkers were pierced with tridents, small spears, skewers and wire. But instead of the marked detachment shown by the first young man who was mutilated, the others

I learn the secrets of the pit of fire

continued from previous page

were openly ecstatic. Some were leaping or dancing; others were falling to the ground or shaking as with a violent fever.

Those who collapsed were dragged to their feet by attendants and steadied until they were able to stand properly.

I formed the conclusion that though the High Priest could have hypnotized the first young man before piercing him with tridents and wires, it was improbable that hypnosis accounted for the behaviour of the other fire-walkers. They were apparently in a state of rapture.

When the excitement died, the fire-walkers stood in silence, as if in meditation. Then, as the High Priest placed the *khalasam* on his head amid the excitable beat of the drummers, a terrific shout went up to the goddess of fire-walking, Mariamma, who is also the goddess of fertility and the Power that created the world.

A procession formed, led by the drummers who were followed by young men walking backwards, holding fire-bowls in their hands before the High Priest. Whenever the High Priest paused, the young men lit a fire on the ground in front of him. And as if to encourage him, the drummers beat a terrific tattoo. Thus the procession went on its two-mile journey to the temple.

A *pujari*, or temple priest, carried a long rope whip which he used to great effect on any spectator rash enough to approach too close.

The crowd gathers

I walked by the side of the procession while my two Hindu photographers took pictures. Realizing that because of the crowds and the traffic, it might be a couple of hours before the procession reached the temple, I decided that we ought to go ahead and take up a position close to the fire-pit.

When we arrived at the temple, we found a large crowd there, including the Governor of Fiji and other distinguished people. By now, the great pile of wood which had burned for hours in the fire-pit was a conical heap of brightly glowing ashes, tended by members of the Fire-walkers' Committee, to whom I was introduced.

Shortly before the procession arrived at the temple, the committee members raked the ashes level.

Sweat poured off their bodies, even though the rakes were fastened to bamboo poles up to sixteen feet long.

I had come to this fantastic ceremony as a result of an advertisement.

My work as chief surveyor for the Government of Tonga led me to Suva, where I noticed in a local newspaper:

> ***The Annual Festival and Fire-walking Ceremony in memory of Goddess Mariamma will be held at Maha Devi Temple, Rewa Street, Suva, between 4 and 4.30 p.m. on August 12.***

When I showed the advertisement to Billy Tillak, my Indian taxi driver—a small man with an engaging smile—he said I ought to watch the ceremonial lighting of the fire at the rise of the new moon, the night before the fire-walk. I agreed to his suggestion, making arrangements for him to call for me after dinner on the evening of August 11.

At the appointed time we drove several miles out of Suva on a good road before turning aside up a rough track into the jungle.

The night was dark. In my ignorance I was prepared for savage rites in a primitive setting; instead, Billy drew up before a modern temple blazing with electric light. With a laugh, Billy pointed to where an open-air cinema-show was taking place. Behind some shops, which were selling sweets, betel nuts, curry and cigarettes, a powerful electric generating plant was humming.

Billy watched me narrowly. He was evidently curious, waiting for the reactions of a European in such alien surroundings. He accompanied me until we were nearly at the temple, then he stopped, refusing to go any farther, explaining that although he was a Hindu he did not belong to the fire-walkers' cult.

At that moment an Indian youth in European dress emerged from the temple door and without any hesitation asked whether he might be of help. When I explained how anxious I was to learn about fire-walking, he introduced himself to me, saying with a friendly smile he was pleased to help in every way possible.

Leaving Billy and his taxi, I was going to follow my new friend into the covered courtyard of the temple when he stopped me at the entrance.

"You must first remove your shoes, belt, or anything else made of leather, as the goddess does not allow leather on the premises," he said.

I placed my shoes, belt and hat (there was a leather lining inside the rim) by the threshold.

Leaving me for a moment, the young man went inside the temple and returned with a *pujari* of the fire-walkers' cult. I was unable to guess his age, but he was a wonderful-looking man, tall and lithe, with his hair coiled in plaits on the top of his head. When he looked me in the eye, I knew I was powerless to conceal anything from him; he had a penetrating purity. I liked the way he clasped my hand warmly in his, while he explained that the young man was his grandson.

Men, women and children were now filing into the courtyard to the rhythmical beat of two drums. As they walked in procession, the *pujari* explained that they hoped to be cured of various diseases.

At the grandson's suggestion we left the courtyard to inspect the fire-pit nearby. It was about twenty-five feet long, six feet wide, one foot deep. Close to the pit was a big heap of dogo wood, amounting to probably forty tons. I was told that the wood was burned for at least sixteen hours before it was all consumed and the embers were levelled for the fire-walking.

I ascertained that an imaginary line drawn longitudinally down the centre of the pit and extended through the courtyard and into the temple would touch the image of the goddess. Therefore a devotee walking across the middle of the pit would have no difficulty in concentrating on the image.

By this time, the drums were beating to a much faster tempo. On drawing nearer to the courtyard, I saw signs of great activity taking place inside the temple and was able to watch the High Priest as he placed small brass bowls containing burning coals before the image of the goddess.

Held bowls of fire

A procession appeared from the rear of the temple. The drummers were followed by young men walking backwards and holding bowls of fire in their hands as they faced the High Priest, who was balancing the *khalasam*, covered with fruit, flowers and leaves, on his head. As he swayed to and fro with one hand steadying the *khalasam* he danced barefoot to the rhythm.

Five times the procession circled the temple in a clockwise direction. Never before had I seen anyone like that High Priest; he danced like a man in a trance, yet he knew exactly what to do and where to go, as if he felt completely at one with the power of the goddess.

At last he turned into the courtyard, where he danced before the temple entrance until, sinking on hands and knees, he crawled inside.

During the dancing, attendants held fire bowls in front of the sick people lining the inner walls of the courtyard, and in every case the patient held both hands over the fire before clasping them over his forehead.

The *pujari* beside me slowly uncoiled his long plaited hair, allowing it to hang around his shoulders. His eyes gleamed with inner fire, so that in imagination, I likened him to an Old Testament prophet.

The *pujari* explained that during the ten days before the fire-walking ceremony, those who have taken the vow to participate go through a rigorous course of purification. They abstain from sexual intercourse, swearing or smoking, and they cleanse their thoughts through prayer and meditation. Only thus, said the *pujari*, are they fit to walk the fire.

"Have you known a case of a defiled person trying to do the walk?" I said.

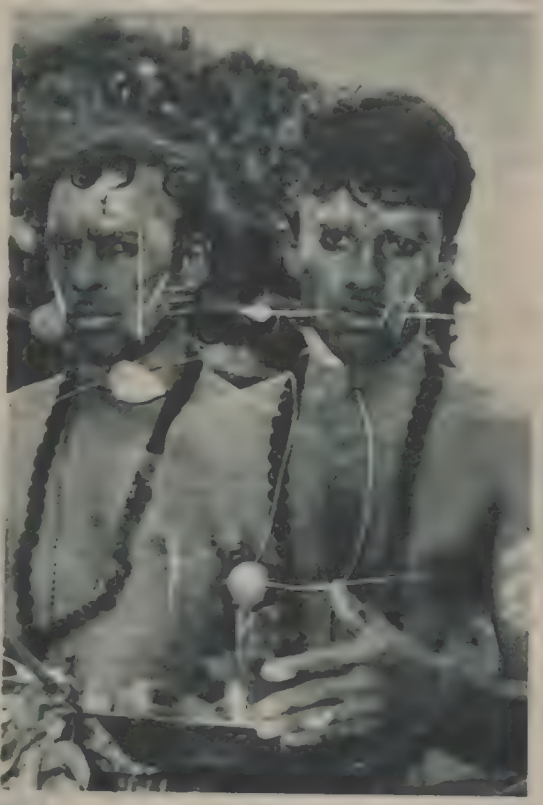
"There was a European sailor who tried to dash across the fire-pit wearing heavy boots, after the fire-walkers had passed over. The soles of his boots peeled before he reached the other side and he was so badly burned that he will never walk properly again, as long as he lives."

The following afternoon, when I had seen some of the fire-walkers' faces and bodies pierced with tridents, skewers and wire, and had gone on ahead to the temple to await the procession, a silence fell on the crowd as the beat of the procession's drums sounded faintly in the distance, growing ever louder. The High Priest appeared and slowly approached the far end of the fire-pit so that he was facing the temple. For a moment he stood praying on the brink before stepping barefoot on to the ashes and walking across with great dignity, balancing the *khalasam* on his head.

The marvellous expression of serenity on his face indicated that he was in an ecstatic state. As he crossed, I held my breath and I watched his feet. A fold of his robe drooped dangerously near the glowing embers. Surely, the cotton material must scorch or ignite. If not, why not?

The High Priest was followed by the other fire-walkers. Some of them were so eager that they had to be restrained by the committee members from leaping on to the pit before the High Priest reached the far side.

A wild fellow, stripped to the waist, thickset and powerful, jumped on to the hot ashes with both feet placed together. Then waving a branch of the neem tree he danced with such joyful



Miniature spears and tridents are thrust through the flesh of fire-walkers before the ceremony. The dish of ashes symbolizes its purpose: purification

The piercing ritual draws no blood, but sends many of the fire-walkers into ecstasy. Some of them danced; others leaped, trembled or fell

abandon that a roar of laughter rose from the onlookers.

An old woman with hair hanging down her back strode across the fire-pit with a look of intense concentration on her face. Was she less immune to the heat than those who walked more slowly? There were youths who sauntered, and others, including small children, who ran across.

The general impression I had formed of the fire-walking was the necessity to try and understand what lies behind it. I determined to return the following year to study the methods adopted by the fire-walkers during their preparatory period of ten days' purification.

When I returned I was married. My wife, Helen, was just as enthusiastic as I was at the thought of trying to discover what lies behind Hindu fire-walking.

We arrived at Suva in plenty of time before the ceremony, and when we called on the High Priest he not only welcomed us to the Maha Devi Temple but also invited us to attend various ceremonies during the preparatory period.

In Fiji, Hindu fire-walking is practised by descendants of the immigrants from South India and Bengal who were brought to the Islands by the British Government to work the sugar plantations towards the end of the last century.

Members of the fire-walkers' sect are called *Shaktas*, and they worship *Shakti*, the Divine Power. They are people with a profound belief in the value of health, and cultivate health of body, mind and spirit.

Shaktas are drawn from many different walks of life: building contractors, medical orderlies at Suva General Hospital, engineers, surveyors, farmers, typists, clerks and so on. Mostly they are practical people living useful lives in the community.

The feats of faith

From this it will be evident that we were not engaged in mysterious investigations on faraway mountain tops. On the contrary, we were observing the feats of ordinary people of faith who take a vow to demonstrate Divine Power in public, at an annual ceremony.

On the morning of the first day of purification before the fire-walk, the *pujari* and the High Priest conducted us into the sanctuary of the temple. It was only a small, plainly furnished room with an image of the goddess at one end. A bowl of fire burned at her feet.

When the High Priest began to pray before the image, I felt a sensation so strange that I am unable adequately to describe it.

I wanted to shout for joy and dance before the goddess, but the conditioning of a lifetime enabled me to withstand the urge. An Englishman dreads the thought of making a fool of himself.

Why did I feel so gay? A strange influence was in the room with us. I had never experienced anything remotely like the same sensation of abandonment in the many churches, mosques, Hindu or Buddhist temples I have visited in the course of my life.

The prayers suddenly came to a halt. Then the High Priest took a bowl of *tilak*, a yellow powder, and anointed each of us in the centre of the forehead, saying we were now initiates of the Maha Devi Temple.

Afterwards, Helen admitted to me that she, also, had longed to dance before the goddess, and there had been moments when she felt an urge to laugh or sing.

A feeling of unusual optimism and well-being stayed with us for about forty-eight hours after our initiation.

A *Shakta* who had wide experience of fire-walking in India and Fiji told me how he had made a study of Western psycho-analytic methods while he was working as a medical orderly in large European hospitals.

"If you want to understand our system of purification," he said, "you can think of your Western psycho-analysis, though our system is far more

continued on page 24

If you're thin, don't worry—there's a long life ahead of you. But you *can* put on weight. The secret is: relax, and take most things in life with a pinch of salt

So you want to get FAT!

"I'm getting tired of all this mania for slimming," a friend said to me. "Why don't you doctors do something for us skinny folk? It's much more miserable being too thin than too plump."

I think he was right. Despite the current enthusiasm for losing pounds from the wrong places most of us are glad enough of the necessary ounces in the right ones.

According to the body-building advertisers, girls giggle at the sight of a man's spindly legs and matchstick arms. And I am certain that men give few kisses to Skinny Lizzies just as allegedly they make few passes at girls who wear glasses.

A surprising number of people consult me about putting on weight. They make a pleasant change from the greedy lethargic folk who want some magic method of reducing.

But putting on weight presents a bigger problem than taking it off.

Often patients merely imagine that they are terribly thin. Girls want the rounded bust which is currently fashionable, and men who live by brain work want the bulging arms and thighs of a weight-lifter.

I tell them that whatever defects they think they have are probably worth it. Fat people tend to die sooner than thin ones, and they are more subject to disease.

Thin people are the temperamental go-getters of this world. They are sensitive. Often they are highly strung and always have a dynamic driving force within them.

Medical checks

Sometimes, when I tell an underweight patient of mine encouraging facts for his self-esteem like these, he is a trifle disappointed. Womenfolk don't hear so much praise for their personality. Appearance is what counts with them, very naturally.

That is why I also sympathize and show both personal and professional understanding for their feelings. Thinness cannot automatically be dismissed as just one of those things. There may be glandular upset or even disease. Careful medical checks have to be made, and no one who is seriously underweight, least of all if a decrease has occurred over previous weight, should try to do anything about it without first having a thorough check up by a doctor.

Nine times out of ten there will be nothing amiss. Then what can be done?

If you imagine that you can start now to fill out your lean frame so that you are a curvaceous or handsome attraction on the beach this summer I should warn you that you will probably be disappointed. It is just not possible to put on natural fat like that.

The best thing is to set yourself a target for the end of a month. Make it modest—say four ounces. If you exceed it so much the better, but if you attain it you will feel that a goal has been reached. Then set a new target for the next four weeks and so on. In a year, at an average of four ounces, you will have gained three pounds.

Most people seem to think that putting on weight is just a matter of eating more. If you are the lean type you can probably eat far more than your fattest friend without making the slightest change in your weight. Here is where a weight-increasing routine is infinitely more pleasant than the rigours endured by the adherents to weight-reducing diets and exercises.

What you have to do is to relax. Have you noticed how you usually put on weight on holiday? It isn't only the food, or even the food at all. It is because you are relaxed and in the fresh air and sunshine.

Sun bathing, as distinct from sun burning and getting too hot, helps to increase your weight. Lying around at peace with the world helps still more.

The more you relax the less nervous energy you will burn up, and your body will store the surplus in the form of fat.

The relaxing exercises are certainly no bother, for they are best done in bed, or at least lying on it.

Lie on your back and pull at the stomach muscles by putting the hands just forward of the hips and pressing the finger tips into the abdomen around the navel. While holding the stomach take three distinct breaths and then let the breath out very slowly. Repeat at least a dozen times. Allow the muscles to relax at the same time. Relax "like a sack of potatoes."

Next do the same exercise, but also raise each leg alternately, without bending the knee, about four inches from bed surface to back of heel, keeping it there while you breathe in and out.

How can that increase your weight? Well, first it tones up the chest muscles and arches the back. If the muscles are developed there is bound to be an increase in weight—and it won't be the flabby sagging fat from over-eating.

You have never seen a first-rate singer, man or woman, young or old, who hasn't a splendid chest. That is what deep breathing can do for your weight.

Now for a simple food idea which must in theory increase your weight and will almost certainly do so. It is a simple password for extra ounces: salt.

Nightly mixture

Most of your weight is in the form of fluid. If you retain more fluid in your tissues then you must weigh more and appear plumper. Salt will help you to do this.

If you can accept the taste—and you will very soon get used to it—have a pinch of salt in all the liquids you drink: tea, coffee, milk, water, beer, soft drinks.

Every night drink a very pleasant concoction of barley water or milk with a half teaspoon of salt and two ounces of glucose stirred in. You can take this hot or cold, whichever you really prefer.

Take a little more salt than normally with your food. Put some in creamed potatoes in addition to the amount used in the cooking, and add some sugar too. The sweet and the salt taste will banish one another and you won't know the difference.

It is not necessary to eat large quantities of starchy foods or fat in order to increase weight. These will merely put the weight round your waist and under your chin, which probably you do not want however skinny you are.

But foods of high calorific value, so that that energy of yours has more fuel than even it needs, are helpful. Sardines and herrings are particularly valuable.

Salt, exercise, calories—plus patience—will send that dial on the scales moving round. You may never get fat, but one thing I can guarantee is that you will get fatter than you are today. THE END

by Dr. WILFRED HALSEY

Mr. Post and his Ghost

by CLIVE BURNLEY

Illustrated by Richard O. Rose

MR. RALPH PENNYWEATHER POST stooped to crime like many another because he was inclined to lie when frightened. He was sixty-five at the time and had recently sold his newsagent's and stationer's shop in Maxton-juxta-Mare to retire to a beamy old cottage in the neat village of Peckover-on-the-Wold.

There one morning he lazily took his pipe off the mantelpiece without bothering to get up from his easy chair and somehow dragged with it a mauve china dog which smashed on the tiles.

He knew at once what would follow. His dear wife Catherine, after referring briefly but pungently to his carelessness and stupidity, would take to the warpath. It was a too familiar trail. She would begin with recent history, declaring for the ten thousandth time that it had been criminally selfish of him to bury her in a remote wilderness like Peckover.

Then she would go back over the years, grudge by grudge, until she came to the allegation that he had been tipsy at the wedding. Catherine's warpath was a long and wordy say. It was almost a relief when it gave way to a considerable period of hardly speaking.

But now Mr. Post refused to face all this. He left the bits where they were and went out to his greenhouse.

It hadn't always been like this with the Posts. Until six months ago they had worked at their shop cheerfully and chummily from dawn, when they got the boys out on their rounds, to long after most dusks. The time Catherine had been able to devote to housework had been limited and the little flat had never been immaculate.

Then they had both fallen in love with Keeper's Cottage, and it had been fun buying furniture and debating about decoration. But something had happened to Catherine at Keeper's Cottage.

It wasn't surprising that she should complain of never seeing anyone, of being cut off from the world in the back-of-beyond. After all, Sandy Lane in Peckover was a little different from the Esplanade at Maxton. But what did astonish and horrify Mr. Post was the sudden and terrible change that had come over her now that she had nothing to do all day but tend her new home. Room by room she was making it a showplace, impeccably clean and tidy—and no place to live in. Already the living-room was a sacred shrine. Next it would be the kitchen.

She hadn't been like this before. But now Mr. Post felt that he was living, not in a home, but in a museum full of priceless objects, every one labelled *Do Not Touch*. He realized that the smashing of a mauve china dog was a crime of the greatest enormity. And he resolved that he would never confess.

So that when, a little later, Catherine came white-faced and thin-lipped to the greenhouse to accuse him, he brazenly pretended to have no idea what she was talking about. A dog? he asked. What dog? They didn't have a—Oh, she meant that thing in the dining-room. That purple thing. He hadn't touched it, he said, hadn't been in the room since breakfast.

He thought it just possible that, if he persisted in his denials, Catherine might put it down to a draught from the window, or a bird flying into the room, or a local earthquake. But he did not in his wildest imaginings foresee to what she would attribute it.

SHE turned pale and thoughtful. "I knew we ought never to have taken this place. It's hundreds of years old," she said. "All sorts of things might have happened here—murders, even. Oh Ralph, I felt it the very first night we spent here. Mrs. Osbert always used to say I was psychic."

"But my dear. . . ."

"Only last week," said Catherine, "on Friday just after lunch, without any reason at all, the kitchen window burst open. And now this!"

"It *was* a bit breezy on Friday," said her husband.

"It wasn't the wind," Catherine told him. "If only it had been. I know what it is. I feel it."

"For Heaven's sake!" cried Mr. Post. "Feel what?"

"Elemental spirits," answered his wife, in a voice of doom. "Primitive forces. What they call a *poltergeist*."

And she began to cry. Mr. Post made consoling noises, but merely out of politeness. He was quite unmoved, being at that moment very busy with his own thoughts.

A poltergeist! Yes, he was familiar with the word. It referred to the type of haunting typified by the violent and magical displacement of portable objects, the chucking about of breakables, sheer ghostly slapstick. The thing was well attested; it really did seem to occur. Catherine and her damnable house pride! It would serve her right if there were a poltergeist.

A malicious spark now shone in Mr. Post's eye. He recalled that there was a time when he had talents as a conjurer. Catherine's eyesight wasn't quite as good as it had been, and she was clearly ready to believe. . . .

How he hated each untouchable treasure in his house, the Minton ware, the glittering brass, the china dogs and gewgaws set in the pervading gleam of polish. He began to perceive a miraculous opportunity.

But he spoke soothingly. "What a fantastic idea!" he said, laughing in a reassuring way.

"Come and see," answered Catherine.

She went in by the kitchen door and so into the dining-room. It was perfectly easy for Mr. Post, as he followed her, to pick up from the top of the refrigerator a cup that happened to be standing there, and hold it behind his back and then, when they were well inside the dining-room, throw it backwards behind him, so that it fell smash on to the kitchen floor.

Catherine shuddered, clutching her throat. "There!" she said, half triumphantly, her theory vindicated.

"There's something funny here right enough," agreed Mr. Post.

From this beginning he went on to greater things. That evening, before he took time off to watch a TV boxing programme, he capsized a table lamp; broke a milk jug (full); smashed a few cups and saucers; scattered the fire irons about the room—the poker made a great scorch mark on the carpet; upset a vase of daffodils, and subsequently caused the blooms to reappear in some very unlikely places.

Catherine hadn't a moment's suspicion that these were not genuine manifestations of an undoubted poltergeist. Bewildered and tearful, she clung to Mr. Post for comfort and support, and he found he rather enjoyed this new submissiveness.

In the course of the next few days, he improved his technique considerably. It was possible to leave objects so precariously poised on shelf or mantel that the next opening of the door, or a footfall in the room overhead, would send them crashing. Strands of dark thread or horsehair could often be used to create the effect of miraculous movement. He even invented a special device for hurling small objects about, based on those toy jumping grasshoppers.

Meantime, he carefully observed the effect upon his wife. The domestic house-pride, to his relief, vanished almost at once; he could now walk into any room in the house in his gardening boots if he chose. But he judged that the treatment ought to be prolonged for some reasonable period to make the cure permanent. The frightened and submissive attitude continued, and Mr. Post enjoyed this too much to feel sorry for his wife.

HE had made one miscalculation, however. He had thought of his pranks as a very private and domestic joke, something within the walls of Keeper's Cottage, as secret as any other skeleton in a cupboard. But Catherine told Mrs. Fox, the daily help; indeed she had to, or leave that eminently respectable woman to assume that the broken crockery was the product of domestic brawling. And Dodd Marley, the jobbing gardener who came in twice a week, very soon heard of it.

After that, they quickly heard of it at the Lowcroft Arms, at the Women's Institute and the Vicarage and at the Hall itself and in every other inhabited place in Peckover.

But it didn't frighten people away, quite the contrary. They were curious and excited. At first they invented all sorts of pretexts for calling at Keeper's Cottage. The retired stationmaster who lived opposite and had never in

Now the poltergeist struck again. It was cruel to give Dolly Osbert such a shock

A flick of his wrist and the cup splintered on the floor. Mrs. Post was gratifyingly terrified

What a crockery-crashing spook it was! Clearly no houseproud housewife should be without one . . .

continued from page 18

six months so much as passed the time of day, came over to ask if he might borrow the electric hedge-clipper, although he hadn't a yard of hedge in his garden. The vicar called; he had suddenly remembered it was his duty to welcome newcomers to the parish, even if they weren't churchgoers. The Misses Worley called to collect for charity. The landlord of the Lowcroft Arms came to pick up empties.

Later visitors made no excuse. Mrs. Hope-Lowcroft herself came down from the Hall in her great quiet car and said frankly she had called to see the ghost. She turned out to be not in the least the aloof patrician Catherine had thought her, but instead a one-time musical comedy actress with a wonderful ease of manner. Reporters came. Constable Huckett came, to ask if Mr. Post wished to charge anybody with malicious damage.

Artists of all kinds respond to audiences, and Mr. Post hadn't the heart to allow his visitors to go away disappointed. In most cases he was able to arrange discreet phenomena for them. Almost all of them had better eye-sight than Catherine. But who could possibly suspect a solid elder, full of calm and dignity, such as Mr. Post, especially when he took care that every *observed* movement he made should be slow and deliberate?

At this time he was feeling very pleased with himself. But this happiness was short lived. For now Catherine, who had first turned to her husband for support and sympathy, now turned instead to Mrs. Osbert, summoned by telephone from Maxton-juxta-Mare.

MRS. DOLLY OSBERT had been Catherine's chief gossip and confidante at Maxton; why, Heaven knew, since confiding in Mrs. Osbert meant giving one's secrets to the world by loudspeaker in the market place. She was a loud, bouncing, managing, florid sort of woman with dyed hair, the thing that Mr. Post had been more glad to leave behind him at Maxton than any other. He determined that she should not forget her weekend at Peckover.

But whatever she might have been, what he did was unforgivable. It was at this time that Mr. Post sank into utter depravity. To slip unobserved into her bedroom and empty the contents of her case partly over the floor and partly out of the window—it was raining at the time—might just conceivably have been considered a practical joke in the poorest possible taste. But it was too much to thread a piece of black thread through the bathroom air vent in such a way that a distant pull would bring crashing to the floor—while Dolly Osbert was in the bath—all the bottles of hair cream, bath salts, antiseptics, gargles, purgatives and pills that stood on the wall cabinet.

Mrs. Osbert leaped out of her warm tub screaming and went running through the house wet and pretty well nude. It might have killed her. In fact she cut her toe on broken glass.

At the time Mr. Post was fifty feet away in the garden.

Mrs. Osbert left next morning. She had turned into a strangely quiet woman with a habit of looking all around her apprehensively. But Mr. Post was without pity. When Mrs. Osbert was saying her farewells to Catherine in the dining-room, a pound paper bag of flour flew out of the kitchen and hit her on the left ear, smothering her with white dust. At the time they could hear Mr. Post in the garage starting up the car.

After Mr. Post had taken a slightly hysterical Dolly Osbert to the station, he called in at the Lowcroft Arms and drank his own health. What an exceptionally clever fellow he was, after all. The whole thing had been a triumph. Catherine would never again be so miserably houseproud; she would never again regard that woman from Maxton as her elder sister. It was worth the sixty-five pounds' worth of damage—he had kept count—that he had done to his own property; it would have been worth five times as much. But he felt that it would not be wise to tempt providence too far; it was time to lay the noisy ghost.

He said as much to Dodd Marley the same afternoon when that green-fingered and white-whiskered old horticulturist made his usual inquiry about "them there demons you got."

"I think I know how to get rid of them," said Mr. Post. "Exorcism, you know, you throw the Bible at them. They don't like it. You see; I'll have them out within the week."

"Lord love you!" said Dodd, looking solemn. "You dussent do that. Don't you know no better than that?"

"But why ever not?"

"DON'T you rile 'em," said Dodd, more solemnly than ever. "Don't you get 'em vexed. I know what I'm talking about; I've had to do with harntings before." He spat on the raw earth. "There's some things in this world," he said, "or in t'other one, as it's terrible dangerous to meddle with."

Mr. Post did mark his words. Not for a day or two, during which everything at Keeper's Cottage was, of course, quiet. But afterwards.

He had quite definitely ceased to be a poltergeist. In those two days he had not chipped a single saucer. He was certain—and who should have known better?—that the poltergeist had left Keeper's Cottage.

But it hadn't.

It reappeared on the third day, and then subsequently, usually when there were visitors in the house. The day Mrs. Hope-Lowcroft called to invite them to her Red Cross garden party, for example, saucepans flew about madly in the kitchen.

Mr. Post began to worry. He recalled that every ghost story he had ever read pointed Dodd Marley's moral, that there were some things with which is was dangerous to meddle. Was it possible that his impertinent imitations of unspeakable things had been noted and a vengeful demon sent to punish him?

The idea took hold of him. He lay awake at night listening to every window-creak, every rustle in the trees. By day he felt that he was watched, that invisible presences stood near.

And then, one Friday evening, when the vicar was taking tea in the drawing-room, Mr. Post stepped unexpectedly into his kitchen in search of his pipe and caught Catherine in the act. He saw her throw a rather nice porcelain tankard—something he had always been careful to spare—through the kitchen door on to the flagged passage.

When she realized that he had seen her, she ran up to her room and lay sobbing on the bed. Mr. Post had to explain to the vicar that his wife was a little upset—such a strain, living with a poltergeist—and then gently show him off the premises.

Afterwards, he went upstairs to see Catherine, who by this time was sitting on the bed, red-eyed but defiant.

"So that's it," he said. "It was you, all the time."

"Oh, no, it wasn't," protested Catherine. "It wasn't me at all when it started, whatever you may think."

"It was you all right today, anyway," said her husband. "I saw you."

"And it was me yesterday as well," said Catherine. "You can make what you like out of that. But not when it started. It was real then. It was only when it stopped—when it went away—that was when I began to make things happen. I just couldn't bear to be without it. You wouldn't understand."

"I certainly don't," agreed Mr. Post. "I'd have thought you'd be only too pleased to get rid of it."

"You couldn't possibly understand," said Catherine sadly. "You don't know how lonely and miserable I was when we first came here—nobody to talk to, no friends, stuck inside four walls. How should you? You had your golf and your garden and. . . ."

"Now don't tell me you put up with a poltergeist just for company."

"But it *brought* me company," she said. "I made friends. People called. All because of the ghost. I'd never have met Emily Worley otherwise, or Mrs. Roscoff. After the poltergeist came, after the first shock, I began to feel happy in Peckover for the first time. People knew me. And then when it went away I was terrified I'd be lonely again. . . ."

"And so you started to be a poltergeist yourself," said Mr. Post in a stern and magisterial tone. "Catherine, I'm shocked and astonished. Ashamed, too."

"But Ralph, I only. . . ."

"Besides," he went on, "it was completely unnecessary. I dare say people did come here in the first place just to see our domestic demon on the rampage, but not now. They know us now. Emily Worley's always going to be a good friend to you now, ghost or no ghost. Hasn't Mrs. Hope-Lowcroft invited us to her party? Doesn't little Jackie Somerset call you Aunty Kate? Doesn't everyone stop to speak to you any time you walk down the village street . . . ? As far as Peckover's concerned, we're in, we're naturalized, and we'll stay that way whether Keeper's Cottage swarms with elemental spirits or whether it doesn't."

"Oh Ralph, do you think so?"

"I know it," he told her. "And, that being so, I want you to promise me you'll never do this again."

"I swear I won't," Catherine said.

"Mind you don't, then," he said. "It was pointless and silly ever to start. Suppose someone had caught you at it? It's different for me; I know something about illusions, but. . . ."

"Eh?" said his wife, starting up. "What did you say?"

"Just a figure of speech," said Mr. Post unhappily.

HE never knew what she might have said next; he was saved by the bell, the telephone bell—it was Emily Worley ringing up, very anxious because the vicar had told her that dear Catherine was unwell.

Whatever the unspoken words might have been, there has existed since that day a tacit understanding between the Posts, who are now very happy.

And the poltergeist? It may surprise you, but the poltergeist is still not quite dead. Very occasionally, when the devil is in them, to amuse a special guest, the Posts will stage some simple phenomena.

And they haven't been exposed yet, even when they put on for other sorts of visitors, the less welcome ones, what they refer to as a "Dolly Osbert."

It gives them a common interest, at least.

THE END

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THE WITNESS STATES

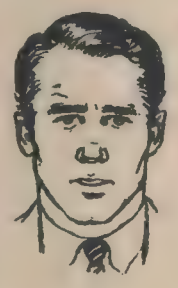
INVESTIGATION:

The murder of Austen Murdoch, a rich, invalid bachelor, found coshed in his room. Medical evidence places the time of death between six-thirty and seven-thirty. The Inspector interviewed three vital witnesses.

FIRST WITNESS:

I am Iris Winters, the dead man's housekeeper. For the past week he had been partially paralysed, and could not leave his bed. He had lost the use of his legs after a stroke. It made him very irritable, and I was glad to get out of the house. I left at six-thirty on the night of his death to go and sit with a sick friend. Mr. Murdoch's nephew Tom was expected at seven, and I left cold dinner for them both in Mr. Murdoch's room on the second floor. When I returned at half past nine both Mr. Murdoch's nephews, Tom and Gerald, were there and so were the police. That's all I can tell you.

SECOND WITNESS:



I am Gerald Murdoch, and I can place the time of death a little more accurately. My uncle was definitely alive at a quarter past seven because he called me up. I'd not heard from him for over a month and he was very irritable and said he wanted to see me. I told him I couldn't come—I was having a little dinner party, and in fact the first guests wandered in as I was still talking to him, as they will be able to verify. He was furious and hung up on me. I won't pretend that I liked Uncle Austen—Tom was always his favourite—but I'm sorry I didn't go over there when he asked me. Maybe I could have saved his life.

THIRD WITNESS:

I am Tom Murdoch. It's true I was expected at Uncle Austen's house at seven, but I was late and didn't arrive until nearly half past. I let myself in and went upstairs to his room on the second floor. He was lying half off his bed with his head terribly battered. I was so stunned I didn't even check to see if he was alive but rushed downstairs to the telephone—it's in the hall—and called the doctor and the police and my brother Gerald. I didn't know where Mrs. Winters had gone, but I wouldn't have phoned her anyway. I dislike and distrust that woman, and I shouldn't think you'll have to look very far to find the murderer.

Can you spot the murderer? Turn to page 31 for the Inspector's comment

NEXT WEEK'S STORIES

MOSE MANNION'S ARMY by OLAF RUHEN

SALLY AND THE BIRDMAN by ROBERT HOLMES

Scrub covered the fairways, molehills dotted the greens. But we couldn't resist it. I sold a flourishing business and . . .

We sank our future in a golf course

by ROY CAREY

A BUSINESS man telephoned me recently at Ashley Wood Golf Club, near Blandford, Dorset. "Is that the club secretary?"

"Speaking."

"Can I have a word with the professional?"

"That's me, too," I said.

He said that he had never played golf in his life and wanted to learn. The next day he came over and I gave him an hour's lesson. After he had finished practising he came back to the nineteenth hole and found me polishing glasses behind the bar.

"Do you do everything around here?" he asked.

"No," I said. "My wife is the cook, housekeeper and hostess. Right now she's cutting grass on the fairways."

I might have added that my wife, Jackie, and I have owned and run the course for the last five years without any staff. We prefer to be independent.

Round the clock

We're no youngsters—I'm fifty-four and Jackie is sixty—but we cheerfully work right round the clock on seven days a week. Sometimes we get so absorbed that we carry on until the evening without sitting down to a meal.

Between us we maintain the nine-hole, 107-acre course, run the clubhouse, and attend to the golfing and social needs of our customers, among whom are accountants, solicitors, soldiers, a frogman, a bus driver, a kitchen hand and a Middle Eastern prince. Three are ex-polio victims.

Most golf clubs are composed of members who pay an annual membership fee, and are run by a committee. This often leads to an "exclusive" social atmosphere. At Ashley Wood we have no members. The regulars buy a season ticket, which enables them to play throughout the year for seven guineas. Casual visitors pay a green fee for the day.

Five years ago I was the owner of an engineering business. I often lay awake half the night, worrying about contracts, bottlenecks, labour relations. I smoked and drank, quite heavily, and my only recreation was an occasional round of golf.

Nowadays I neither smoke nor drink, my sleep is unbroken and untroubled. I have never been fitter or happier in my life, and my only regret is that I rarely get time to play a clear round of golf. Jackie is equally enthusiastic about our new life. "Next year," she keeps saying, "I'm going to give up cutting the fairways." But I can't see her entrusting the job to anybody else.

One of our greatest satisfactions is the opportunity of meeting so many people. Golf is one of the few games which can be played by all age groups—a man of seventy-eight recently came to me for a course of lessons—and by people from every walk of life.

We have come to recognize among our customers every known approach to the game, and to cater for it accordingly. The other day two army officers, rivals in the same regiment, arrived at the course simultaneously. I suggested to one that they should play together.

"What—with him?" he said. "We hate the sight of each other."

"That's all the better," I told him. "The trouble with competitive golf these days is that there's not enough hate in it."

He saw the point; the two officers went round the course together. When they had finished their round I approached the one I had spoken to earlier, hoping to find that they had patched up their differences.

"Did you settle your quarrel?"

"No, but I've never played a better game of golf in my life."

Our indifference to social conventions can sometimes lead to extremes. Once I saw a perspiring fat man about to drive off in his braces. This was going too far, and I gently pointed out that braces were not the thing to wear on a golf course. But his reply was unanswerable. "In that case, guv'nor, how am I supposed to keep my trousers up?"

On another occasion I paired a local garage owner with a director of a big engineering firm. Later I asked the garage owner if he had enjoyed his round. "It was fine," he said. "I sold him a car on the tenth green."

Some people take their golf too seriously. One retired colonel came into the clubhouse after a round looking quite distracted. "I'm finished," he said. "I've played this game for thirty years and haven't improved at all. I'll never try to hit a golf ball again."

Colonel's bogey

His wife intervened. "You don't need to take it to heart, darling. You can play beautifully when you're on form."

The colonel agreed to give the game another chance. Later, when his wife was alone, I told her: "It was very noble of you to cheer him up like that."

She said: "Well, I couldn't have him hanging about the house all day, now could I?"

To the best of my knowledge Ashley Wood is the only privately owned and run golf course in the country. Yet in the summer of 1952, when I first set eyes on the course, it was on the verge of extinction.

I had gone to Blandford with Jackie to visit our son, who was stationed in the town. During our stay, I asked

The Careys gambled £10,000 on making their club pay. They run it without help — and sometimes find time to play

We sank our future in a golf course

continued from previous page

the major who was looking after the course if I could play a round on it (at the time I was a keen, low-handicap golfer). "You can try," he said.

We drove up to a derelict shack which had once been a clubhouse. The major, waving his club in the vague direction of the first green, said: "Usually someone walks ahead with a red flag to show where the greens are."

As we played with difficulty round the course, I noticed that scrub and undergrowth almost met in the middle of the fairways. Each green was riddled with molehills; one contained a nest of young rabbits. The long grass was choked with rusting buckets, broken bottles and rotting golf balls.

A farmworker on a tractor was ploughing up a large tract of land adjacent to the fairway. I pointed this out to the major. "It will all be ploughed up soon," he said, gloomily. "The place is about to revert to farmland."

Somehow I could see through the desolation of the course and imagine it as it ought to be. Jackie saw it, too. On the spot we decided to sell the refrigeration engineering business which I'd spent years building up in Essex, and take over the club. A week later we bought the club for a few hundred pounds; there were six members on the books. Soon afterwards we took a flat in town and got to work.

The job was formidable. Although the club had existed for seventy years it had no sanitation or water. The nearest electricity was two miles away.

Learning by trial and error, we worked as long as daylight lasted, destroying pests, clearing the course and re-laying the greens.

While the builders began work on a guest-house, we rebuilt the nineteenth hole, installing a bar and a kitchen. My experience as an engineer proved vital: I bought and assembled an electricity plant. I was able to construct a pumping engine after water engineers had bored down in the chalk, and brought up water from six hundred feet. Jackie became expert at painting, glazing and mixing concrete.

We had our setbacks. A voluntary helper killed a score of newly planted trees by watering them with weed killer. I was temporarily out of action with frostbite after laying the clubhouse roof in the depth of winter.

Meanwhile the club membership had risen from the original six to ten, and Jackie and I were approaching the end of our resources. We realized that, to stay in business, we should have to appeal to a far wider circle than the few local golfers who used the course. I called a committee meeting.

I told the members: "We have decided to disband the club membership and throw the club open to the general public on a fee-paying basis." They heard me out in frigid silence. Then they walked out in a body, and never came back.

Not long afterwards I took down the club sign for repainting. The next day somebody phoned: "I see your sign is down. When do you move out?"

During the next six months our fortunes were in the balance. For days we went without seeing a customer. In one week we made 4s. 5d. Over the year our profit amounted to £30. Our position was becoming desperate: we had sunk £10,000 in the venture, and it looked like becoming a total loss.

Enter the G.I.s

One day, as I was playing aimlessly round the deserted course, a large American car stopped on the road alongside and the biggest American I had ever seen got out. "I'd sure like to be able to hit the ball like that," he said.

"I'll teach you—I can spare the time," I added ironically.

He was a master sergeant from an American army rest centre at Shaftesbury and he confided later that his C.O. had ordered him to get six inches off his waistline. Soon he was coming regularly, and bringing his companions. He lost seven inches. After a while the camp authorities "adopted" the course and laid on five coaches a day.

The invasion of the Americans saved us. They were so keen that they would go out in a snowstorm. Once, I was surprised to find a group of them finishing their round in complete darkness, illuminating the greens with headlamps. A bunker in the form of two hillocks was christened Marilyn Monroe.

Improving the condition of the course has become a passion. Friends always send us flowering shrubs for birthday presents. One of our regulars, an ex-naval commander employed as a government inspector aboard the factory ship of a whaling fleet, presented us with a large wooden box which gave off an unpleasant odour.

"Put this on your greens," said the commander, "and you'll be surprised at the result. It's a fertilizer made from the offal of whales, and believe me, it will make anything grow."

A steady profit

I carried the box down to a copse near one of the greens. When I returned a few weeks later to use it, the box felt surprisingly light: mice had eaten all the contents. I found some vegetable manure on the course soon after and laid it on the greens. The grass came up a rich, lush green in places. The commander returned from a whaling season and played a round.

"I see that stuff did the trick," he said.

For the past two years we have made a steady profit. One of our most successful ventures was the opening of an indoor golf school. I invented a system of golf tuition based on my knowledge of mechanics, and it attracted a steady stream of pupils.

"We make our own golfers" became our motto. Of the club's 350 regulars, nine out of ten have been my pupils. But the system has its disadvantages.

After a full and tiring day on the course, we went to spend the evening with a friend who had been a pupil. We found that he had just got back from playing a round on a famous course in the Midlands.

For the next two hours we were forced to listen to a stroke by stroke commentary on his game. THE END

IN SHORT

Understanding

My father says (and he should know)
That if you want a plant to grow
You have to learn to understand
Its nature, and the kind of land
It likes to live in, and (says he)
A wife is much the same: when she
Is discontented, it means you
Have never learned to say or do
The things that make her happy, and
They're simple once you understand
A woman's nature; but (said he,
And smiled) it's not learned easily:
You can grow to understand a plant,
But with a woman, you often can't!

DOUGLAS GIBSON

Careers For Girls

Daddy, why can't I leave school? All the other girls are earning lots of money.

You'll get a better job if you keep on studying.

Even Dora gets seven pounds a week.

What does she do—deliver soap coupons?

Actually, she's in a factory where they make imitation roast chickens—you know, to put in fridges in shop windows.

Very interesting work. But you stick to Latin.

Sheila took Latin and now she works in a pet shop. Selling bells for budgies.

Obviously she didn't stick at it long enough.

And Anne's in an estate agent's. Last week they sold half a mountain.

Splendid. What's that clever girl, Muriel something, doing? The one who always went around in army surplus?

She's working in a laboratory, giving colds to mice.

Surely you'd like to go to a university?

I should be an old hag when I came out. Can you see me, in two cardigans and flat heels, waffling to a lot of kids about the Reformation?

You wouldn't *have* to teach. A degree would be useful in business.

I'd rather be in Paris, like Shirley. I bet you didn't have diplomatic immunity at nineteen.

In my time we didn't need it.

Barbara's been lucky, too. She's going to be a travel hostess in Italy. Funny thing is, she wanted to be a missionary.

Well, what do *you* want to do?

I often think I'd like to call myself Marguerite and sell hats. Suppose you borrowed a few hundred pounds and we took that little shop at the corner. . . .

E. S. TURNER

Don't Get Me Wrong

The time, I believe, has arrived
When the truth should be thoroughly aired.
When we say that our income is fixed,
We don't mean that it's been repaired.

RICHARD ARMOUR

Foreign Affairs

Elbridge Hollins went to a fancy dress dance at the University of New Brunswick rigged out as Davy Crockett, the pioneer. He didn't win a prize, but was jailed for thirty days for carrying a concealed hunting knife and a shotgun without a permit.

* * *

A grocery store assistant in Topeka, Kansas, obligingly cashed a twenty-dollar cheque for a customer who signed it "U. R. Stuck." The cheque bounced.

* * *

A Memphis, Tennessee, cinema billed its double feature: *Adam And Eve: Going Steady.*

Sally Craves Colour

It must be something to do with the sap rising, said Sally, but what her system cried out for was Change. Change and Colour, she emphasized, and when I said did that mean she was thinking of dyeing her hair, she said no, she was planning to redecorate the sitting-room.

The only trouble was to decide on exactly the right colour scheme. She couldn't make up her mind whether to go all late Victorian and cabbage roses and William Morris, or to be wildly abstract, with squiggles and thin lines and splodges of blacks and purples and yellows, and John Piper. Or neither.

For weeks afterwards the sitting-room was a kaleidoscope of wallpaper snippets, paint squares, tufts of carpet and slivers of curtain material which Sally sorted, and re-sorted, and pondered over, and pinned up all round her. She tried a new combination every morning and "lived with it," as she said, for a day, squinting narrowly at the tiny pieces to imagine how they'd look *en masse.*

Soon, she said, she was dreaming colour schemes, each more lurid than the last, and it was after waking up in a cold sweat out of a nightmare room with blood-red walls and curtains covered with blazing suns that she decided she'd do it Japanese-style, dead white walls, and no carpet, and curtains made of sacking.

It all looked rather stark, Sally admitted, but the children's doll's house was now a riot of colour, redone from floor to attic with all the sample snippets.

DAPHNE BOUTWOOD

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Hepworths

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103 OXFORD STREET, LONDON, W.1.

AND IN MOST OF THE LEADING TOWNS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY

M18

Bracegirdle and the teenagers

continued from page 12

from the Grassingford side earlier on."

It wasn't registering. Joe was shaking snow from his coat.

"The sergeant told me when I dropped in for the coat," Bracegirdle went on. "I could have sent you back then. But it seemed a good chance."

"A good chance?" Joe said slowly.

"I'm getting on, Joe," Bracegirdle said. "Either I'm going to be boss down in Holtrigg, or I'm not. If you want to be boss, I'm going to clear out and raise chickens somewhere and let somebody else deal with you. We're going to have it out now even if it means fighting it out."

"You're thirty years older than me," Joe said.

"You should worry about fighting an old man, Joe, after the way you beat up the old woman. . . ."

That shook him. He lurched to his feet, eyes blazing. "That's a lie, damn you! It wasn't me. It wasn't any of us. You'll not get me for that. I'll swear by all the saints I didn't do it."

"No?"

"You want me to hit you, don't you? You'd get me for striking a cop."

QUIETLY Bracegirdle took off his coat, folded it, put it on the floor. He did the same with his tunic.

"I'm not a cop now, Joe. It's between an ordinary man and a sneaking amateur hoodlum."

That was when Joe hit him.

The floor was slippery. One of the torches slid sideways and the place was like a cellar. For a full minute Bracegirdle was too busy getting his second wind and dodging Joe's flailing blows to worry about what came next. Thirty years younger. . . . If Joe closed in, it wouldn't do at all.

Bracegirdle hadn't been in a scrap for a long time. But it came back. Like swimming . . . the footwork, the timing, waiting for the moment.

His back was hard against the wall. Joe was coming for him, head down. He thought it was time to hit Joe. He did so, coldly and scientifically, and Joe staggered, pained and surprised.

From that point on, it was more of a fight. Two of Joe's blows connected, and the inspector shook himself. Wouldn't do at all. Getting old.

Grim work, there in the snow. The wall shook as his back slammed against it. Tough work after a tough trek. Better get it over, or Joe might wear him down.

His left fist lifted Joe's chin, and what guard Joe had, reached for the ceiling. Bracegirdle's right hand caught Joe in the same place as he sagged forward. And that was the end of it. Joe went down in a heap. Bracegirdle turned away, breathing hard. It was sheer bad luck that he slipped on his own folded tunic and went sprawling, cracking his head against the wall.

He saw Joe spring for the heavy torch. He saw the murder in Joe's hot eyes. There wasn't a thing Bracegirdle could do. The torch was in Joe's hand and it was coming down. Nothing could have stopped Joe.

And yet, something did. He was staring down at Bracegirdle, the torch in his hand, as if something had turned him to stone. Then he threw the torch into the corner and put his big hands over his face.

It took the inspector a minute to pull himself together. Then he got to his feet shakily. He put on his tunic and coat. Then he shook Joe's shoulder.

"I don't know about you, Joe, but I could do with another nip." He shoved open the door. "Snow's stopped. It won't take us so long to get back. Downhill all the way. The car will be snowed up by now, so we'll cut straight for town."

Even so, it took them nearly three hours. They were half-way down when Bracegirdle said: "Want to talk about anything, Joe?

"I didn't beat up the old woman," Joe said. "That's straight."

"I never thought you did, Joe."

"Where did you learn to fight? It was a beauty, the one that floored me."

"In a boy's club, when I was a teenager. We had to pass the time somehow. We had no juke-boxes then."

It was half-past eleven when they saw the lights of Holtrigg in the valley below. They came into a steep lane above the church, and followed it to the corner of High Street. Bracegirdle started to fill his pipe.

"Joe, why did Moira Kelly drop you? She said she'd no time for a cheap thug. But she also said you wouldn't tell a lie to save your life."

"So what?"

"I'd make her take back that crack about the cheap thug, Joe."

He started to say something, bit it off, shuffled his feet in the snow.

"Joe, you're not getting any sermon from me about joining Father Clancy's youth club. Go on wearing your fancy clothes if you like, but let it stop there. You're not cut out for the big stuff. A man who can't lie and can't slug a cop when he's down has a big handicap."

Joe opened his mouth again. "That Carnelli job," he said with difficulty. "I bust the door. Few packets of fags, that's all. Thought I'd better get it off my chest."

Bracegirdle had a bad moment. He thought briefly of the Chief Constable. He thought also of duty, which he had always spelt privately in capital letters.

"Why did you do it?"

"For the hell of it," Joe said. "And to get back at Carnelli, I guess."

"Pay Carnelli for those cigarettes," Bracegirdle told him. "Send him the money through the post, and enough to have the door repaired. And a fiver for luck, if you feel like it."

"You're not pulling me in?"

"No," Bracegirdle said.

He stood on the corner, watching Joe Mullins tramp away through the slush.

He'd proved something tonight. He wasn't sure what. Not just that he could lick Mullins. Not even that Mullins was worth licking. No, something else.

On the High Street, the landlord of the Barrel Vaults was airing his dog before locking up. Farther down, Constable Bradley was trying a shop door.

"Everything all right, Bradley?" he asked.

"Everything under control, sir."

The church clock struck midnight, and one of his rare smiles crossed the inspector's grizzled face. What he had proved didn't matter much to anybody but himself. It was merely that he felt somehow that these long years in the old northern town under the windy moors hadn't been wasted.

"Goodnight, Bradley," Inspector Bracegirdle said. THE END

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CURIOSITY—1

Curiosity is one of the most permanent and certain characteristics of a vigorous intellect.

Samuel Johnson

I learn the secrets of the pit of fire

continued from page 17

thorough than yours, because ours is spiritual."

One of the *Shaktas'* traditions during the ten-day purification is the *kanganam*. This is a yellow cotton thread tied with great solemnity round the wrist of the man, woman or child who takes the vow to walk over the fire. It is the outward sign of the devotee's intentions not only to fire-walk, but also to attain New Birth (the expression used by the fire-walkers).

Shaktas' self-discipline during the ten days include processions, sleeping on the ground stripped to the waist, ritual bathing and Yoga exercises.

I have already mentioned how on the eve of the fire-walking young men danced in a circle in the temple courtyard to the rhythmic beat of two drums.

When I returned the following year with my wife, we watched them whirling to the beating of the drums. It was the same movement as before.

A powerful man vaulted the courtyard wall and, roaring with laughter, gripped me by the hand. The result was that I began to dance too. I laughed until the tears ran down my cheeks.

My wife was so astonished that she gripped my arm. Then all three of us were laughing and dancing until the *Shakta* let go of my hand.

What had happened? As soon as the dancer had taken my hand, I felt a tingling sensation pass up through my arm. On reaching my head it almost swept me off my feet with a feeling of joy. Helen said that when she took my arm, she felt a tingling feeling course through her body as well.

There was no doubt in our minds that the *Shaktas* had evoked *Shakti* by dancing in a circle.

There was great excitement as an Indian girl was carried in and laid at the feet of the old woman. The girl appeared to be in her late twenties. Seeing an Indian Muslim policeman standing near, I asked him whether he knew the girl. He replied that it was well known that she had been paralysed from birth.

The old woman was joined by a man and they prayed together over the girl as she lay before them. The High Priest then emerged from the temple and stood looking down at the girl. With a ringing tone of command he ordered her to rise.

She scrabbled about on the floor before arriving at a kneeling position, where she swayed backwards and forwards, twisting her head with a curious circular motion.

Slowly, very slowly, she rose by a stupendous effort and was on her feet, with a dazed expression on her face.

Falteringly, a step at a time, she walked in the direction of the temple door at the far end of the courtyard. There was a sigh of relief from the crowd as she flung herself on the ground before the image of the goddess, visible to her through the open doorway.

The High Priest blessed her. Amid profound silence she rose to her feet, this time much more easily, and walked back the whole length of the courtyard.

It was like a scene from the Bible.

During the night before the fire-walking ceremony, when the August new moon was in the ascendant, fresh limes were laid on the bottom of a square trench inside the fire-pit. The fruit was covered with dry mango sticks and small pieces of paper on which thousands of prayers were written. Blocks of camphor—sun symbols—to purify the ground, were added to the pile before it was lit from a fire-bowl brought from the temple.

The addition of more camphor blocks and warm butter caused such a blaze that it was possible to stack logs from the forty-ton pile of wood over the flames in the shape of a cone.

At the lighting of the fire, a small boy aged about eight was standing near us, enthralled by the details of the ceremonial. He wore the sacred thread, *kanganam*, on his right wrist, showing that he had made a vow to walk over the fire on the morrow.

The next day we watched him awaiting his turn to cross the pit. Before he stepped on the ashes, a flame shot up in front of his toes, but without faltering the little fellow strode boldly across with an eager look of anticipation on his face, like a child who sees his mother holding out her welcoming arms.

What faith!

The crowd applauded as several young fathers carried small children in their arms over the fire-pit. I watched the children closely. As far as I could see, not one of them even winced at the waves of heat rising from the pit, yet we, who were ten feet away, had to shield our faces.

After the drummers had led a triumphal procession of fire-walkers, three times round the pit, a procession of women arrived holding fire-bowls. They also circled three times. A *Shakta* explained that the women were either too weak to cross the fire, or were defiled through recent illness.

At the conclusion of the ritual, the women went to the temple in order to pour the burning contents of the bowls over their heads, at a ceremony called the Fire-Bath.

As we wandered round the outskirts of the temple, we found a number of fire-walkers holding their feet out for the inspection of curious visitors.

A *Shakta* follower remarked to us: "We never object to the examination of our feet or our garments by serious investigators, though they never discover anything!"

With a wry smile, he added: "Why is it not possible for Europeans to be less materialistic and to observe the power of our goddess? This is a faith that really works. It is not all talk and promises."

THE END

© *George and Helen Sandwith, 1959*

The above extract is from "The Miracle Hunters," to be published by Rider on June 22, at 21s.

DACHSIE

SITTING PRETTY

by **ROGER SMITHELLS**

New covers for your old armchairs will make them look better and last longer. Make them yourself and save money

THE next best thing to buying new armchairs or sofa is to dress up those you already have in bright, new covers. Very often, new covers are preferable to new chairs, as old armchairs tend also to be old favourites and remain their comfortable selves though dressed in new clothes. New covers can also change the whole character of the room, without any further redecoration. Many an aged chintz three-piece suite has brought a room right up to date in a new coat of modern tweed with contrasting cushions.

Buy the best

When you decide to re-cover, buy the best quality materials you can afford. You want a really firm, good quality weave to stand up to the stresses and strains of constant getting up and sitting down. Loosely woven materials will soon be worn threadbare.

The hardest wearing of upholstery materials is wool. Many of the modern tweed materials are made entirely of wool. These would probably cost you upwards of 30s. a yard, but you can buy many tweeds that do not have any wool in them, which will give you good wear, and look attractive, for about 10s. 11d. a yard. Among this year's tweeds are tartans and big check designs, making unusual colour combinations, which can fit in with most rooms with plain curtains. Mix these with other patterned fabrics with care. Their boldness may kill more delicate designs.

Next in line to wool is cotton, and cotton damask is a splendid choice for a more conventional room. It is hard-wearing and is made in lovely soft tones, though you can find bright colours if you wish. The John Lewis Partnership sells Conway cotton damask, fifty inches wide, in an excellent colour range for about 16s. 11d. a yard.

When you have studied the measuring chart on page 26 and decided how much material you need, you may well decide that your budget won't stretch to either of these materials. In this case, your best buy is cotton repp, which you can buy in a wide range of colours for approximately 7s. 11d. a yard. It is tightly woven and pre-shrunk, and dyed in fast colours, so that you can wash repp covers successfully at home. This is an important point, because one of the advantages of loose covers is that they can be kept fresher-looking than fitted covers by frequent laundering.

It is important to choose new chair covers to suit and, if possible, to flatter the room they will be in. Very dark, strong colours are inclined to make the room seem smaller, which is why the modern trend favours light colours for upholstery. These paler shades are not as impractical as many people think, for oatmeal and greys wear clean, and the clear modern patterns don't show the dirt any more than the old-fashioned dingy tones.

Flowers are a tonic

If your room is dull and needs a tonic, choose a floral design. Flowers are always in fashion, and the modern treatments of clearer colours and simplified design look most attractive and keep their freshness after washing or cleaning better than the older type of muted shades.

Before you start, make sure that the chair itself is in good condition. It is not worth spending time and money on one whose frame is rickety or has broken springs. Never try to put a loose cover on a leather chair, as it always slides about and looks untidy. Even if you pad the back and seat with newspapers to stop the material slipping, the result is usually bumpy and uncomfortable.

If you choose chintz, cretonne or printed linen, which are usually 31 in. wide, you will need about 8 yd. of fabric for an armchair with inside back measuring 2 ft. 8 in., plus tuck-in of 5 in. each side; for a two-seater sofa, about 15 yd. Other materials generally measure 48 in. across, and of these you will need 5½ yd. for an armchair and 10 yd. for a sofa. For *each* loose cushion, you should allow an extra yard, and if you decide to make a box pleated frill, which takes most material, you will need an extra yard to cover the piping. With wider materials and patterns, you often get enough material for the piping from wastage. You will sometimes get enough wastage to use for the frill without buying extra material.

Now if the chair is a very awkward shape, study the present cover carefully, and draw out the shapes of the pieces on large sheets of pinned-together newspaper with a thick black crayon, to help you with your calculations.

Most important to the fit of a loose cover is the fabric allowance for tuck-in round the seat. Don't economize on tuck-in: a skimpy cover never keeps its shape and is apt to pull and wear badly. You should allow at least 5 in. in each place.

Make them last

To prolong the life of your loose covers, make matching arm and back caps. For these, you will need another 1 or 1¼ yd. of material according to the size of your chair. These caps will give extra protection to the parts of the chair which get most wear, and can easily be removed for cleaning.

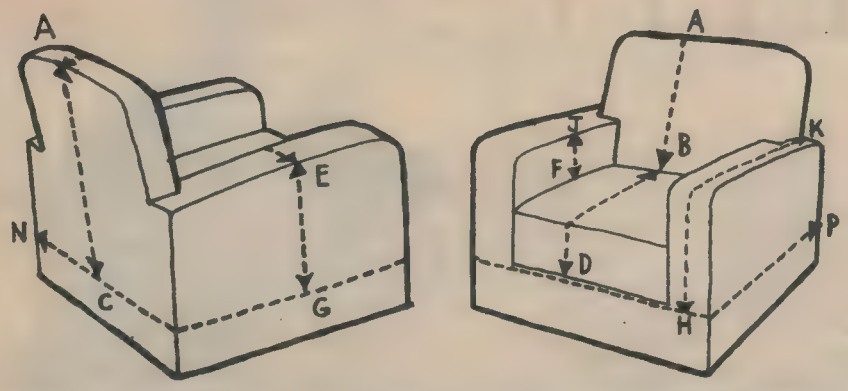
Modern loose covers are generally made in the conventional way, with the simplest possible trimming. They are very well fitted and strictly tailored. Over-trimmed covers are apt to become bedraggled too quickly.

There are four methods of trimming: First, the tie-under covers which will leave the legs exposed. These are best for armchairs with longish legs, such as wing chairs, or stools. They are

Give your home the spring-time look

Making the covers

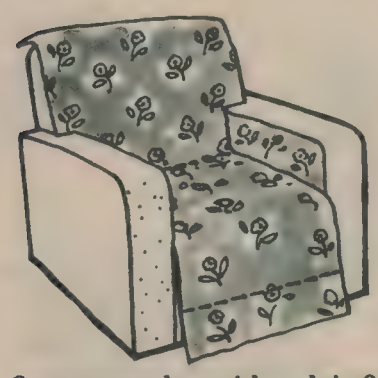
continued from previous page



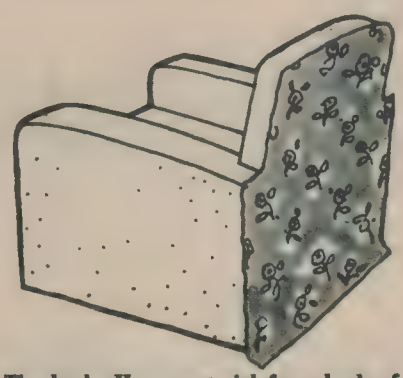
Measure the chair as shown. Note down the length and width of each piece, and add the lengths together to reckon the amount you need to buy. Narrow pieces can be laid side by side on the material so saving length. A good method of calculating material needed is to cut a newspaper pattern for each piece, and lay the pieces out on the floor

Mark the measurements on this chart

	Width	Length
Inside back A—B		
Outside back A—C		
Seat B—D		
Inside arm F—J		
Outside arm E—G		
Welt H—K		
Frill N—P		
Piping (allow 1 yd.)		

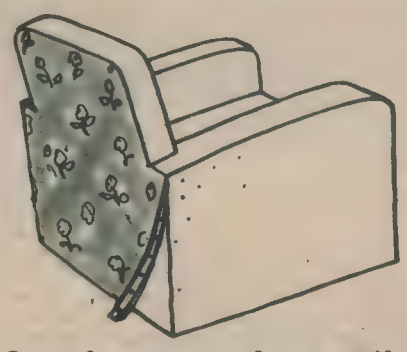


Centre patterned material on chair. Outline back and seat with chalk. Cut allowing 2 in. turnings, 5 in. tuck-in behind seat. Cut seat piece, allow 5 in. tuck-in, sides and back. Cut inside arm pieces with 5-in. tuck-in and fit to back and seat

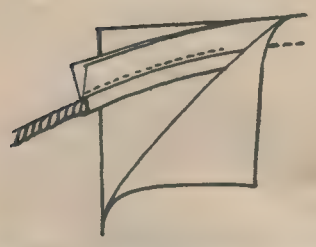


The back. Hang material from back of chair, and mark with chalk along top, down sides, and along bottom, allowing 2 in. for seams. Cut, and pin to chair, fitting to front piece. Mark and pin all pieces inside out, to facilitate making up

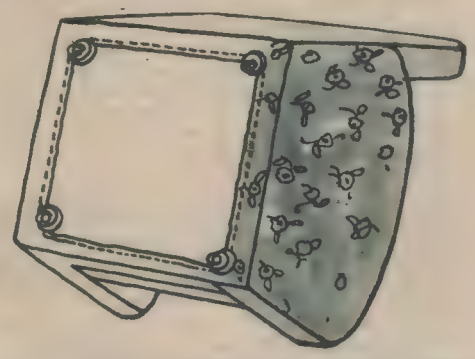
Cut pieces for outside arms. Allow 2 in. for seams and pin to chair, then measure for welt strip. The pattern should run lengthways for this. Cut welt allowing 2 in. for seams and stitch to outside and inside arm pieces, and inside back



Leave the cover open down one side from top to bottom of chair for placket fastening. This should be faced back, and piped on one edge to match opposite side of cover. Fasten with hooks and eyes, bought popper tape or zip fastener



Make ten yards of piping by covering piping cord with a narrow bias strip of the loose cover material. Cut strips 1½ in. wide in light-weight material, 2 in. if thicker. Stitch into seams



To make a tie-under cover, leave a good allowance at the bottom and cut round legs allowing one inch for turning. Turn and face with a bias strip. Hem pieces between legs and thread through elastic or tape

not so practical for large pieces of furniture, as tie-unders are sometimes difficult to fit back to exactly the same size after washing or cleaning, and they are inclined to ride up and expose the underneath of the chair.

The second method is the gathered frill which is the most successful when using light-weight materials. With heavier materials it can look too bulky.

The third is a box-pleated frill which gives a crisp, tailored look and suits most rooms. This takes a little more material.

The fourth is a straight valance with a kick pleat or inverted pleat at each corner. If possible, the valance should be lined, especially when using fairly light-weight fabric, but lining is not always necessary with a substantial material.

TIPS

1 To renovate your loose covers without completely remaking, remove the platform and replace it with a plain piece of material which will be hidden by the cushion. Then use the piece of material to renew and patch any worn parts of the rest of the cover. If the chair stands against the wall, you could remove the back instead.

2 If a loose cover has shrunk and does not reach the floor, sew a fringe to the bottom to lengthen it.

3 To save the head-cap of the chair from grease marks, make a plastic shaped head-cap and fit it over the top of the chair *underneath* the loose cover.

4 Use contrasting piping cored to give a smart finish to a chair cover. Try black piping on a mixed tweed with a touch of black in it, or charcoal grey on yellow. Remember that piping accentuates the contours of the cover. It must only be used on a well-tailored cover.

5 Always buy pre-shrunk piping cord.

6 Always take home a cutting of material before you buy it, to see how it looks in the light in your own room. Fluorescent light in shops has a misleading effect on many colours.

7 Don't choose a large pattern for chair covers. There is seldom room to

Cushion Ideas

This three-part cushion has many uses. Make it of sturdy canvas or sailcloth in one, or in contrasting colours, and you can use it both indoors and out. The three sections are made separately and hinged together with strips of material the length of the cushion which are inserted below the piping. Put the hinges on opposite sides of the middle cushion so that you can fold all three together into a pouffe. With one flap up, you have a comfortable low chair to lean against the wall for television watching. All three laid out make a soft daybed for the garden or terrace

do justice to it, and smaller patterns look better.

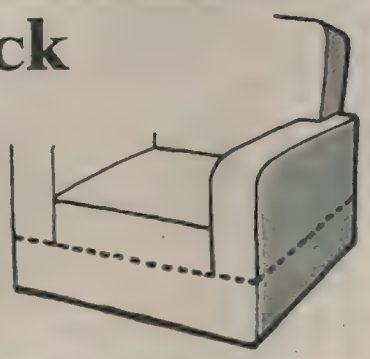
8 Try breaking up the three-piece suite effect. Cover sofa and one chair in a printed fabric. Then take one of the predominating colours of the design and match it in a plain fabric for the other chair. Don't be afraid to mix fabrics. A tweed chair looks quite in keeping with a printed linen sofa.

9 Give a three-seater sofa a new look with back and seat cushions in three contrasting colours, or three different shades of the same colour, such as purple, parma violet and mauve. This sort of scheme is particularly suitable for sofas with wooden frames and arms.

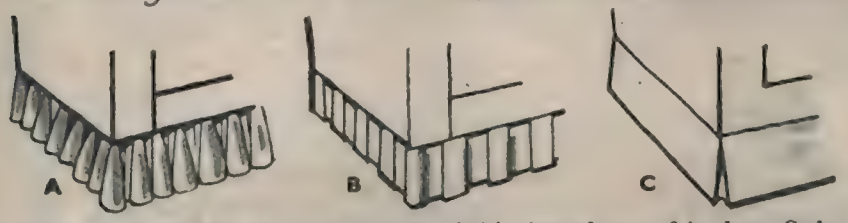
10 Don't overdo the loose cover effect. Three or four crisp covers will look charming, but footstools, lampshades and pouffes all dressed up to match will tend to look ridiculous.

Take your pick of trimmings

To make a neat finish at the bottom of your cover use one of these methods

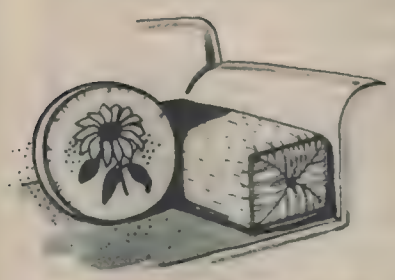


The skirt at the bottom of the loose cover should be 6 to 7 in. deep. Measure this length from floor allowing 2 in. for seam



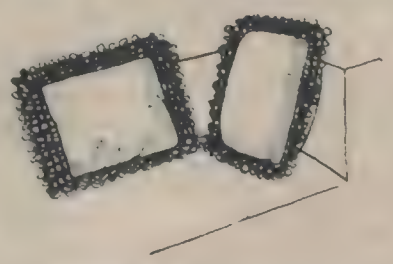
A. For a gathered frill, cut a strip twice the chair's circumference, 8 in. deep. Gather and join to cover. B. For a pleated frill, cut a strip three times the chair's circumference. Pleat up, and join to cover. C. For a plain valance, cut a strip to fit round the chair, plus 40 in. for 10-in. kick pleats. Line before making

Cushions have come more into fashion with the Japanese influence in decoration. Here are some ideas for home-made cushions which look different



Plain square cushions are enlivened with a checked gingham frill round the edge, to match your colour scheme. The cheapest filling for cushions is kapok; an alternative is latex foam clippings which are easy and clean to handle and comfortable to sit on

A square bolster makes a change from a round one. Make this one as a headpiece for a divan in a bed-sitter in the same material as the bedspread. The plain round cushion is decorated with the motif from a patterned chintz which is cut out carefully and appliquéd to the centre



Make these pyramid cushions out of five triangles of brightly coloured felt. Apart from their unusual looks, these pyramids are very comfortable wedged into awkward corners in angular chairs. You could add a long tassel to one point for further decoration

ROGER SMITHELLS WILL HELP YOU

with your home-making problems. Write to him at "John Bull Illustrated," 189 High Holborn, London, W.C.1, enclosing a stamped, addressed envelope for a reply. Send a rough drawing where this will make your problem clearer

MAKE IT YOURSELF
by ROGER SMITHELLS

Television chair

Here is a cheap and easily constructed chair, upholstered with latex foam. The legs are ready-made. There are no difficult joints to be cut. This is how you make it—

Cut a piece of ½-in. plywood for the seat, 18 in. × 18 in., and a piece for the back, 22 in. × 18 in. (bottom) tapering to 16 in. (top). Drill ½-in. holes in the seat and the back for ventilation. The back and seat are joined with 6-in. angle brackets, mounted on wedges of wood 6 in. long, tapering from ½ in. to nothing, to give a comfortable slope to the back (Fig. 1). Drill holes corresponding to the holes in the brackets positioned so that the bottom of the chair back is in line with the bottom of the seat but set back ¾ in. to leave a gap between the seat and the back for upholstering. The brackets are set in 2 in. from either side of the seat. Assemble the parts, using 1-in. bolts with large washers on the outside.

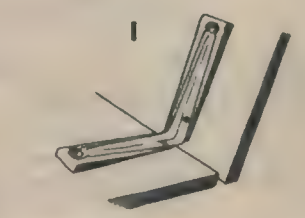
Make up the seat padding from a piece of 1½-in. cavity sheet latex foam, 17 in. × 17 in. with edging strips of ½ in. × 1½ in. plain latex foam sheet stuck round it with a rubber adhesive. To give a slight doming to the upholstery, take a 9-in. square of ½ in. plain sheet, taper back the edges and stick it lightly to the centre of the cavity side of the latex foam seat. Taper back the edges of a 7-in. square, and stick it to the 9-in. square (Fig. 2). Make the back in the same manner as the seat, using a piece of 1½-in. cavity sheet, 19 in. × 17 in., tapering to 15 in., with ½-in. thick edging strips, and a 9-in. square in the middle of the cavity side.

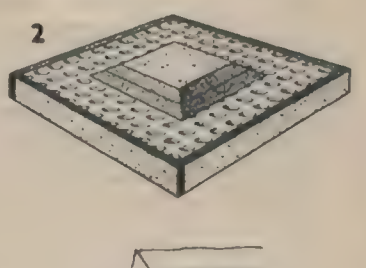
Fixing the upholstery

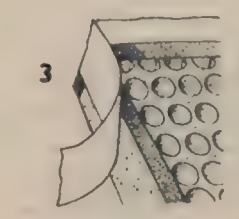
Tape the edges of both cushion pieces with 2-in. wide calico tape stuck on with rubber adhesive ready for tacking to their respective plywood bases (Figs. 3 and 4). Fix the back cushion first, cavity side to the plywood. Use a fairly heavy material for the upholstery. Fix the back covering, tacking one edge and pulling tight in the direction of the arrows in Fig. 5, and tacking the other edges to the outside of the back. Put on the outside back covering, turning the edges down and tacking. Fix the seat cushion in place in the same way as the back. Place the seat covering fabric in position. Tack it to the underside of the front edge, pull it tight, and tack it to the underside of the other three edges. Cut the fabric to fit round the angle brackets. Stitch the covering material at all the corners to give a neat finish.

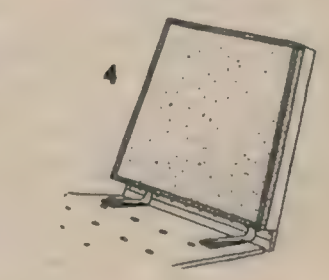
Screw 9-in. prefabricated legs in place on the seat, with the two back ones set as far back as possible. It adds to the comfort of the chair, to cut 1 in. off the length of the back legs.

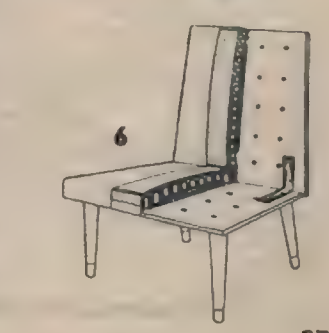
The specially designed sitting position with the resilience of plywood and the comfort of latex foam makes this chair particularly suitable for watching TV.











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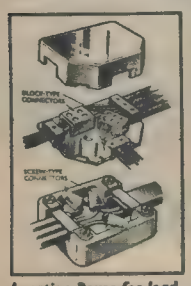

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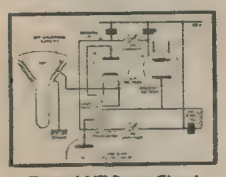

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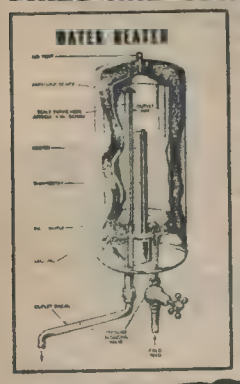

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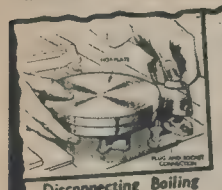

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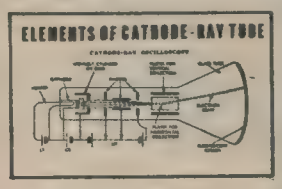

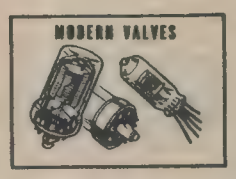

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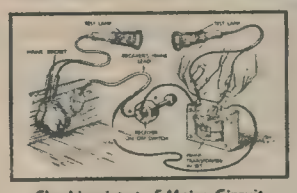

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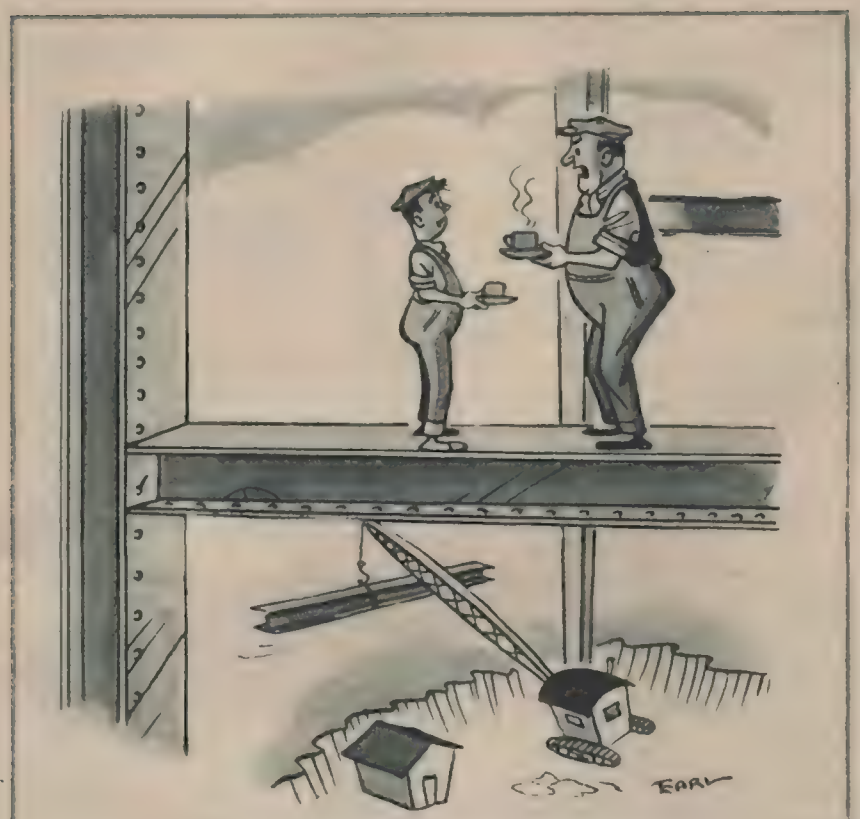

"You've slopped tea in the saucer again"

Earthshaker

continued from page 8

M. Tweed, and, on the other side, *Your Friend and Mine*.

Gabe slipped it into his pocket for old times' sake, and went on hunting for his books. He'd ask Sam about them when he woke him for supper.

By supper time Gabe's father was dead.

WITH no ties, no responsibilities, and the feeling that America was no safe place, Gabe Decker was soon on his way. The thought of sunshine, alien people, and the prospect of booty, drew him like iron to a magnet. In his wallet was the money from the sale of Sam's farm and the clipping headed, *Treasure in Africa*. It read:

A few "live wires" around town have been bemoaning the end of the recent pearl-finding craze, which began about three years previous with the discovery of clams in Sugar River that bore pearls betwixt the membrane and shell. These adventurous spirits are saying a chap can't make an easy dollar any more.

For the benefit of any such, we pass along an item culled from an English journal that found its way to our offices this week. It states that out in Darkest Africa there's a hoard of riches fit to turn Mr. Jim Brady green with jealousy. It is presided over by a Kaffir chief named Lumpemgoola, and it consists of a great many chests of gold, more diamonds than you could scare up on the Great White Way of a Saturday night, and enough ivory to make Steinway keys for every man, woman and child in Wisconsin.

There are only two catches to the business. All this hard stuff is laid away in a native "corral' in Matabeleland, and from what we can gather that's quite a way off. The second catch is Mr. Cecil Rhodes, a gent of whom we have heard a few things even in the backwoods here. For the privilege of digging gold in Lumpemgoola's territory, the great Rhodes has taken the said chief under his protection, and even pays him a hundred pounds per month.

When Decker woke to another bright African day, he had recovered his natural equanimity. He had breakfast and went down to listen to some early-morning conversation.

The district was apparently swarming with hordes of Matabele. They were raiding farms and driving off cattle. They'd killed Mashona men and stolen Mashona women, but no whites had been hurt yet. Decker digested this for a minute and then set out across the yellow savannah, followed by his silent dog.

There were two thin columns of smoke rising in the windless clear air beyond the flanks of the highest hill westward. He set course for that, whistling thoughtfully. Shortly he walked into the Matabele camp.

A crowd of warriors, a hundred or more, were lounging around a couple of fires. As Gabriel Decker walked to the fire, each warrior there laid hands on his shield and spear. The American's nape prickled.

He stopped and looked for someone to whom he might speak. The leader of this gang should logically know a little English; or have on call a lieutenant who did.

Almost at once he recognized the man who had spoken to the Prinsloo girl yesterday.

"Do you speak my language?" asked Decker, staring at the man.

There was no answer. A soldier moved restlessly behind Decker, and the shaft of an assegai rattled once on a shield.

Decker drew in his chin and hunched his shoulders slightly forward. Suddenly he was not sure whether he was in danger here or not; but he declined to form an opinion. "Do you talk English?" he asked.

The tall warrior said: *"Ubani ongezwa loko?"* The words meant nothing to Decker, but the scorn was unmistakable. One of the men standing nearby hefted his weapon and gave a little hiss through his teeth.

A man who was seated beside the lean tall warrior looked up from the bone he had been gnawing. Slowly, perhaps painfully (for he was ageing and seemed to carry the cold of the night in his bones), he got to his feet.

"Hau!" he exclaimed. *"Yekela, inkosi*, why you talk at Mgandaan, who is *matjaha*, when I is the induna Manyao?"

Decker tipped back his hat in salute to the old man. "You speak two languages," he said. "Only a wise man can speak two languages."

"Eke, I talk *isingisi* good, I is one-time at Kimberley, is shake-hand Ulodzi." Ulodzi was the Matabele name for Rhodes. "Is it you want?"

"I want to know if I can go to Lobengula's kraal."

"Ha!" said Manyao. "Big *impi* is all-round and how can the *inkosi* go to Lobengula *edwa*, alone?"

"I want to know if you will let me go through the *impi*," said Decker, guessing that the word meant a regiment.

"Why?"

"I have guns for Lobengula," said Decker. "Long rifles."

MANYAO fingered his lip. A shadow of worry passed over his wrinkled face. *"Lembala!"* he said to Decker. "Go to Lobengula, go well, give him the guns, go and say Manyao, the induna Manyao, is say it. *Hamba gahle, inkosi*; go well to Lobengula."

"I will return to the town and make ready my guns, and I will start to the king," said Decker. Then, half through reasoning, half by chance, he hit on an acceptable farewell. "Eat well," he said. "Eat many cows, induna."

Manyao beamed at him as he turned his back and walked deliberately through the lines, the warriors parting for him, the mongrel bitch at his heels.

Back in Victoria, Decker had a drink in Napier's Bar, and asked the man behind the counter who might have a piece of horseflesh for sale. Horses were scarce and hard to find. But after a while he had a list of a dozen names; at the head of it was "Prinsloo."

The Prinsloo cottage was a low house of pale red bricks.

Maria opened the door herself. She was dressed again in her khaki riding habit. "Yes?" she said abruptly.

"Mrs. Prinsloo, could I see you a minute?"

"I'm going riding. If we might talk while I up-saddle?" she said perfunctorily.

Decker followed her to the stables. He said: "Ma'am, my name's Gabriel Decker, and I have to go to Bulawayo."

"Then send a request to Lobengula. He'll allow it; you'll be another hostage when the war starts."

"Is your husband out on the reef?" Decker asked.

"No, in Bulawayo, where you're aiming to go. He's an agent there for the Company."

"Oh," said Decker, disappointed. "Well, I have Manyao's permission to go into their country, and why I wanted to see you, I wanted to ask if you'd sell me a horse for the trip." Then, on the theory that two outrageous requests might confuse her into granting at least one, he added: "I have to learn a little of the Matabele lingo, too. I heard you speak it, and I was thinking maybe you could teach me some o' the groundwork."

SHE took the stallion by the bridle and led him out of the small building. She mounted, groped with her right foot until she had found the low stirrup, then showed Decker her face again.

"Who are you, Mr. Decker?"

"I'm a drummer."

"A what?"

"I sell things," he said. "A drummer's a travelling salesman. I guess the word ain't British."

"Ah, you're a commercial traveller. And you want to sell 'things' to Lobengula?"

"That's it."

"Well, Mr. Decker. I wouldn't let

CURIOSITY—2

The man who is inquisitive into the secrets of your affairs, with which he has no concern, should be an object of your caution. Men no more desire another's secrets to conceal them than they would another's purse for the pleasure only of carrying it.

Henry Fielding

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Earthshaker

continued from page 29

you have a horse or spend three minutes teaching you Sindebele, even if I did believe you."

"You don't believe me?"

"Please, don't look as though you couldn't imagine why." She gathered the reins tight in her left hand. "Let's forget the silly story," she said. "I haven't time or inclination to assist anyone now, nor would I care to help you commit suicide. You do know there'll be war?"

"I'd heard it. It's not certain."

"Neither is sunrise, I suppose. But I hear the betting is three to one for it. *Sengihamba*, Mr. Decker. That's Sindebele for 'Now, I am going.' I'm afraid it's all I'll be able to teach you." Without looking back, she single-footed the great horse out to the road and turned him south.

Although he felt certain now that no one else was going to provide him with a horse voluntarily, Decker looked up all the names on his list anyway. There was just one available, a spavined wreck that Decker would not have hesitated to shoot out of pity had he owned it.

"Deadhead," he told his dog, as he stood outside the place where he'd rented a room, "if they think I'll stop here, after I spent four solid months in the veld with that buckboard, they don't know me. I'll have a horse by tomorrow."

He tramped up the stairs to his door. He lifted the thumb latch and shoved into the room, and saw a knot of half a dozen men before him; two of them were sitting on the bed going through the contents of his canvas rucksack. Among the others he recognized the black-bearded man called Moran. Decker's scattergun was under his armpit, but before he could drop it into his hand he was looking into the muzzle of a heavy revolver.

"Mr. Decker," said Moran tightly, "please hand me that shotgun, and tell your mongrel to sit, before I have to shoot her."

"Lie down, Deadhead," said Gabe to the bitch, who was grinding out a low menacing rumble. "What the hell is this?" he said, without moving to give up his weapon.

ONE of the men on the bed began to slap his palm with a sheaf of papers. Decker flickered an eye at him: it was the young man named Peters whom he had seen in the bar.

"I think," said Peters coolly, "before we tar and feather and run you out of the country, you'd better tell us just what you came to these parts to do."

Gabriel Decker stared at the six men, momentarily feeling as insecure as he had in the Matabele camp. "I'm a drummer—commercial traveller."

"We think you're a damn spy," said Peters, waving the papers he held, which were brochures from the Aborigines Protection Society.

"A spy for who?" asked Decker, astounded.

"For this blasted, crumpets-and-tea, milk-and-water, Kaffir-coddling gang of nattering back-stabbers!" shouted Peters, shaking the pamphlets angrily.

"Shut up, Peters," said another of the men. "I'm Captain Lendy," he told Decker, "the magistrate of this district. I'm sorry we've broken into your room like this—Moran, for God's sake put up that pistol, will you? The fact is, Decker, they called me in after they'd done it. I certainly wouldn't have condoned it on such trivial evidence."

"What evidence of what?" said Decker, totally bewildered.

"Evidence that you aren't what you, ah, claim to be," said Lendy, who was plainly a little disconcerted. "Moran, explain it."

"You come here carrying enough weapons for a siege——" began the man with the black beard grimly, and Decker grunted: "Well, Africa ain't a ladies' seminary."

"Yes, but two rifles and a shotgun! Then you're seen leaving an *indaba* with the Matebele——"

"I must tell you that thus far they haven't a thing to charge you with," put in Lendy.

"Are you defending him?" shrilled Peters.

"Don't be an ass, I'm merely explaining to a presumably innocent man the reason for bursting into his room," said Lendy stiffly: "Have you credentials?"

"If I'd known I'd be running into a bunch of doubtin' Thomases, I'da carried some," Decker said. "But I been drumming all over the States and Mexico and the Transvaal and nobody ever suspicioned me like this before."

"Here are his credentials," said Peters, flapping the Aborigines Protection Society leaflets. "Oh, it's a fair cop, Decker, we've got you with these."

"Hear, hear," said Moran, fiddling with his holstered gun.

"Perhaps you'll tell us first how you came to have so much of that—that literature."

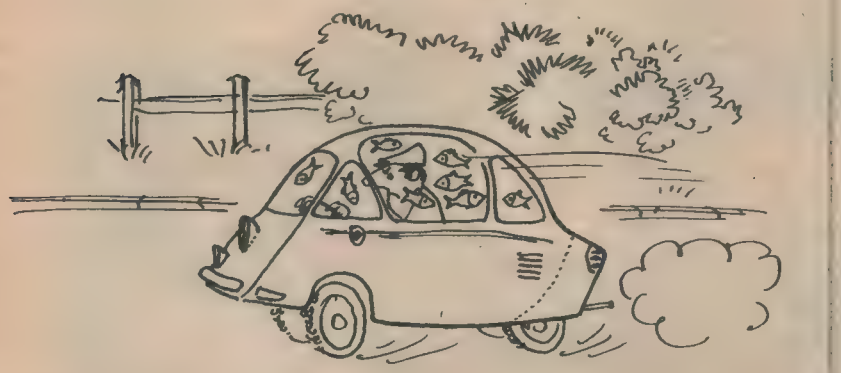
Gabe glanced around him at the six Englishmen. These cool civilized oysters gave him the shakes as badly as Mgandaan's raiders. He thought of the clipping in his wallet, and he was far from easy in his mind. He mustn't be searched: even if he had to cow them with his scattergun.

"I was in London," he said, "and scoutin' for information on Africa while I waited for the ship; and somebody sent me to that society. They loaded me down with a raft of their propaganda. I been using it to start

CURIOSITY—3

You know what a woman's curiosity is: almost as great as a man's.

Oscar Wilde



fires." And that happened to be perfectly true.

"You might have chosen less inflammatory stuff to carry—no pun intended," said Lendy. "Are you aware that the Aborigines Protection Society is made up of Mr. Rhodes's bitterest enemies? That they'd like nothing better than to see the Company ejected from Mashonaland, even if it happened to be on the points of Lobengula's spears?"

"I gathered they didn't like Rhodes. I've read most of that junk at least twice, coming here. Some of it's pretty comic."

"You wouldn't think it was comic if you lived here," said Lendy sadly.

"So you claim you aren't one of these Aborigines Protection Society spies?" said Peters.

"Do I look like a psalm-thumpin' missionary?"

"I suppose I can take your word on that for the moment," said Lendy. "I don't believe I'll allow you to visit Lobengula just yet, however. Not unless you can produce more evidence to show you aren't working for the A.P.S."

"You're stoppin' me here?" asked Decker in a level voice.

"For the time. If you'll just let me have the address of your firm, I'll telegraph them for verification of your story."

"Got a pencil?" asked Decker blandly. "Send it to B. Arnold of the Aaron Burr Harmonica Corporation, Detroit, Kentucky, U.S.A. Old Ben'll tell you I'm the goods."

"Very well. You're to remain in Victoria till I have an answer—though of course I shan't stop you if you want to go back to the south," said Lendy. "Meantime, I'm sorry for the mess they've made in your room. I'll ask you boys to leave with me right away," he said to the five splenetic Volunteers.

"If anything's missing after they've gone," Decker told Lendy, in a friendly, obliging tone. "I'll come and report it to you."

As the door closed Gabe sat down on the bed and laid the shotgun beside him. He was not surprised to find he'd been sweating heavily.

The door opened again. The man who owned the hotel thrust in his red face and rum-blossom nose. "You," he said, jabbing the air violently, "you be off. I got no rooms for foreign busybodies."

"Oh, for God's sake," said Decker, realizing with disgust that Peters or Moran must have put him up to this. "Sic him, Deadhead!" The bitch leaped from the floor instantly and the man slammed the door with a squeal of fright.

Decker gathered up his belongings, inspected the rifles to see they hadn't been tampered with, whistled the dog to his heels and vacated the disagreeable place. . . .

It was night. Maria Prinsloo had stripped and washed herself all over, scrubbing with the wet, hard-soaped towel until her skin took on a radiance, shining rose where it was not soft fawn from much sunlight.

Prodigally, because she resented her idleness and must make some foolish protest against it, she dabbed scent where her pulse beat strongest; behind her knees, in the bend of her elbows, along her jaw below her ears.

She had no wall mirror. She opened her vanity box and propped it on the stool. Backing away, she tried to see herself in its little glass. She wondered if Ernst, her husband, far down in his Afrikaner soul, truly believed that a woman should be plump. He *said* he didn't. . . .

There was a sound at the back of the house.

She had been looking down at herself; her head came up with a start, and she stood rigid, waiting. There was another sound, only a slight crack as of wood contracting. At once her eyes searched the bedroom for a weapon. There was none.

There were rifles in the parlour. Snatching a crumpled skirt from a chair, she stepped into it. The skirt would not stay up without its complement of petticoats. Holding it to her bare waist with one hand, she ran on her toes to the closet. She knew this was imbecility, waiting to dress when God-knew-what was creeping through the darkened house. Yet she could not force herself to go nude into that room.

As her groping hands touched a blouse she heard the bedroom door open. Soft, so soft was the creak of death in her ear; her chance had gone while she fumbled coyly for clothing. She spun round, pulling up her loose skirt and hugging the blouse.

His face was striped and daubed with red war ochre. He stood in the doorway, spear and shield held upright, eyes glittering in the lamplight. Maria opened her mouth but could not scream.

He grinned. Then he stepped towards her.

© *Robert Krepps, 1958*

NEXT WEEK: Shooting match in the black king's kraal

The Inspector's comment

See page 20

I don't think we'll have to look far for the murderer, either, but I can't see much wrong with Mrs. Winters's story. Gerald's is the one that interests me. He claims to have received a telephone call from his uncle; yet Austen Murdoch was lying paralysed in a room on the second floor—and the telephone, as Tom stated, was in the downstairs hall. Too bad Gerald didn't visit his uncle more often. Otherwise he'd have known there was no phone in his room—a point he must have overlooked in his panic to get back and stage his alibi by the time his guests arrived.

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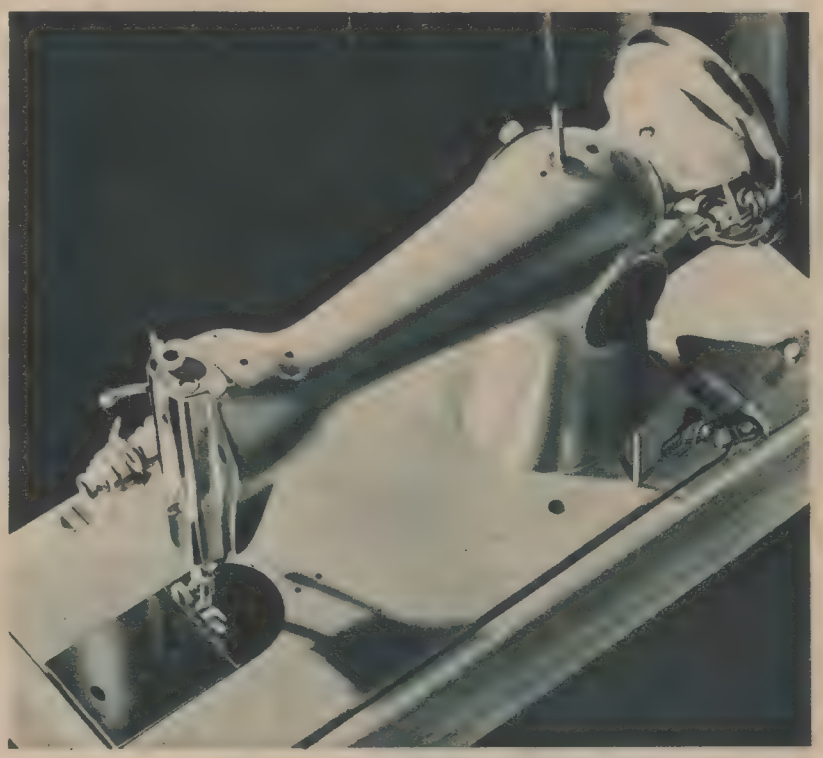

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Can NATO protect us today?

continued from page 9

attack. That is the more serious since this flank covers the exits to the Atlantic available for Russia's large submarine forces.

The basic truth of the situation is that throughout all these years Free Europe's safety has really depended on the *deterrent* effect of the U.S. Strategic Air Force—its power to answer any Russian aggression on the ground by retaliating with nuclear bombs against the Russians' homeland. The huge outlay on the Nato ground forces and tactical air force has counted for little, if anything, as a defence or as a contribution to the deterrent. The most that can be claimed for it is that the feeling of doing something towards their own protection may have helped to maintain the morale of the European peoples in face of Soviet menace.

But now a new and much bigger question has arisen—whether the Nato countries can rely any longer on the protection hitherto provided by the deterrent power of the U.S. Strategic Air Force.

Russian rocket achievements have shattered the prime premise on which Western defence policy has proceeded in building up its strategic organization —the complacent assumption that America has, and will continue to have, a strong superiority to Russia in nuclear weapons and the ability to deliver them to their targets.

The performance of the moon-rocket, following on that of the sputniks, has demonstrated to Western

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CURIOSITY—4

The first and simplest emotion which we discover in the human mind is curiosity.

Edmund Burke

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scientists that the Russians have developed a system of guiding large rockets, at immensely long ranges, which is far more accurate than any the Americans have yet evolved.

A power that already possesses such an accurate system should have little difficulty in delivering hydrogen bombs, at a range of 3,000-5,000 miles, close enough to the great cities of America to wreck them.

The moon-rocket is shattering to faith in the superiority of American weapon-power, and in the protection thus promised against aggression. It is the bursting of the dam that covers the Nato valley.

This does not mean that the West's nuclear power, embodied mainly in the U.S. Strategic Air Command, has completely ceased to be a deterrent and protection. It remains a deterrent to, and thereby an indirect protection against, *nuclear* attack so long as the capacity for retaliation is sufficient to ensure that any surprise blow—any attempt at a nuclear Pearl Harbour —is likely to be mutually suicidal.

But it has become doubtful whether this former "Great Deterrent" remains a sufficient deterrent to a strong invasion with conventional forces.

Nuclear parity leads to nuclear nullity —because the suicidal boomerang result of using such weapons induces strategic sterility. Moreover, parity in this sphere does not require equality in numbers—of bombs and their carriers—but only the capability of delivering the minimum, a very low minimum, that would wreck the capital and great industrial centres of the other side.

Now that Russia has taken the lead in the rocket field, as a counterbalance to America's strategic air force, the very large and long-existing numerical superiority of Russia and her allies in ground forces becomes much more formidable. The combination is likely to strengthen confidence in an ability to develop pressure on the West with impunity. That in itself tends to make local incursions, and minor wars, more likely.

In the past, American military spokesmen have often declared that their forces would retort with nuclear weapons to any attack on countries or places in the Nato area. More recently the qualifying phrase "major attack" has been used, although still with the implication that even a local frontier incursion would be met with nuclear action if other means did not quickly stop it.

Moreover, most of the training of the Nato forces during the last five years has been based on the assumption that nuclear weapons will be used, immediately, against any aggressive move.

Whenever the slightest doubt has been voiced about possible American hesitation at retorting in this way, it has been indignantly contradicted, on every level. Little regard has been paid to the approaching state of nuclear stalemate which has now arrived.

Would an American government venture to launch its nuclear weapons to stop an encroachment upon, or even a strong invasion of, the territory of a small ally abroad—once it realizes the likelihood of such a retort precipitating a nuclear counterstroke upon its own, now accessible, and very vulnerable, homeland? Will its small allies abroad continue to believe that their American protector would take such a suicidal risk on their behalf?

More important still, will the Russians believe it? To the coldly calculating men in the Kremlin, such extreme self-sacrifice must look so nonsensical as to be improbable.

Much depends, therefore, on whether the men in the Kremlin take due account of emotional reactions, and pressures, on the other side. History shows that these can make nations disregard all reasoned considerations of self-interest, and even self-preservation. Khruschev may have learned the lesson of Hitler's fatal miscalculation in 1939—based on the assumption that the British were too rational to plunge into war, and risk their own destruction, in fulfilment of a hasty promise to Poland.

Such a reckoning would form much the strongest check upon a Soviet invasion of Nato territory. But the development of nuclear stalemate makes it of vital importance to strengthen and improve—in efficiency and readiness for action—the Nato ground forces' capacity for checking any local encroachment that Russian or satellite forces might attempt.

The primary danger today lies in the possibility that some small aggressive move, unless quickly curbed and quenched, might develop unintentionally into nuclear war.

Unfortunately, the problem has been

"Now, as I was saying when I had to leave last time . . ."

complicated and the danger increased by the expedient of trying to compensate the insufficiency of the shield force by arming it with tactical atomic weapons.

These devices were adopted with insufficient thought about the consequences.

None of the Service chiefs, nor the heads of Shape, have produced any convincing reason for believing that tactical atomic weapons would be able to stop an invasion without recourse to all-out nuclear war. On the contrary, they have repeatedly in their public utterances shown that they regard it as impracticable to differentiate between the so-called "tactical" and "strategic" weapons, and their employment.

It is thus hard to see how the adoption of tactical nuclear-weapons strengthens the *deterrent* to aggression —as the Western military chiefs fondly claim. For if the Russians come to the point of being ready to risk war in face of megaton bombs, either from trust in some new antidote or in nuclear stalemate, it is not likely that they will be deterred by the supplementary check of the relatively small kiloton bombs in the tactical field.

Risk to Britain

Indeed, it is more likely that their awareness of Shape's conclusion, that differentiation is not practicable, will encourage them to believe that they might safely go a long way in gradual aggression before the Nato statesmen would dare to unleash nuclear weapons of any kind.

Meanwhile, Shape's conclusion, coupled with its acceptance of the idea that tactical atomic weapons diminish the need for troops, has naturally tended to counteract its own efforts towards building up an adequate shield force.

Now Nato is faced with the tremendous implications of nuclear stalemate. What will be the principal effects? The first is to diminish the deterrent to aggression by conventional forces. The second is to increase the potential importance and value of the Nato shield force on the Continent, both as a deterrent and as a defence.

The third is to increase the risks of belonging to Nato unless the shield force is made strong enough to repel a Russian attack *without* unleashing nuclear warfare.

For Britain there are particularly great hazards in commitment to the Nato guarantee of protection to all its extensive and variegated membership. She could all too easily find herself dragged into war to resist some local encroachment or squeeze upon one of the Continental members' territory. So long as the shield force remains inadequate even a small threat of this kind might precipitate general nuclear warfare.

In that event, Britain would be the most fatally vulnerable of all countries, because of the industrial density, and dependence on supply through seaports, of her small, island home-base.

Hence it is in her own vital interest to make the best possible contribution to the strength of the Nato shield force on the Continent. But it is no less important for her to press that the Continental members should make a proportionate contribution.

Unwilling allies

At present, the military product of the Nato countries is very poor in proportion to their population. The six countries, other than the United States, which jointly provide the shield force for the central front have a population of 170 millions, but only furnish the equivalent of fifteen divisions for the defence—a mere 190,000 fighting troops. Yet Russia, from a population of 200 millions, produces about 170 divisions —ten times as many in proportion.

In examination, one finds that the majority of the Continental members of Nato are spending only about four per cent of their gross national product on their own defence, whereas Britain is spending more than eight per cent. France is now spending the same, but much of it is absorbed by the partisan struggle in Algeria, and her contribution to the direct defence of Europe is dangerously small.

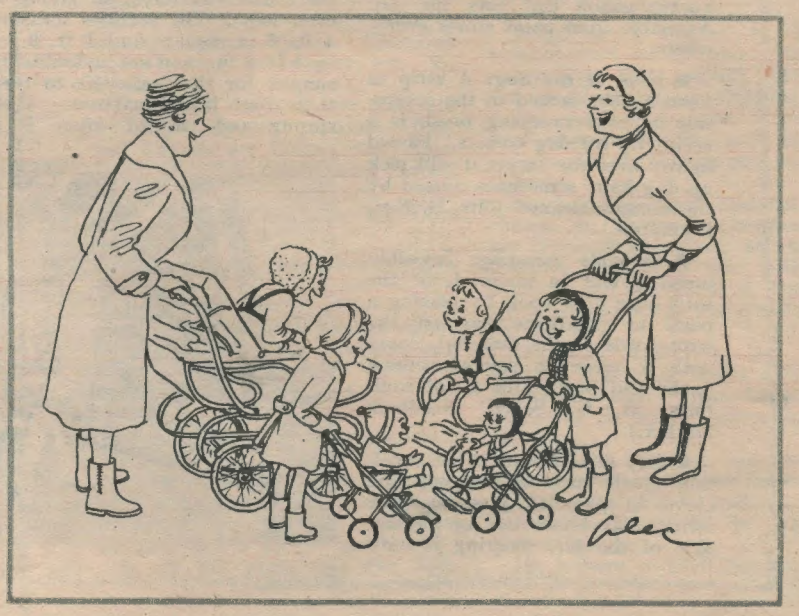
Another deficiency is that national service in most Continental countries is too short to produce an adequate number of efficient divisions. Britain's allies are reluctant either to increase the term, or to provide high enough pay to get enough regulars.

A further question, no less important, is how far the pitifully small number of operational divisions that Nato has produced is due to bad organization of the available resources. It is evident that the Russians are getting a much higher proportion of operational divisions out of their man-power, and there is ample reason to suspect that the organization of the Western armies is inefficient and wasteful.

The whole question needs a thorough investigation by impartial experts. If it is to be effective, it must not be entrusted to departmental Service committees which are subject to prevailing vested interests, and used to the extravagant establishments of the last war, nor to parliamentary committees and nondescript commissions of inquiry that, through inexperience, can be easily bamboozled.

Given the will, the intelligence and a thorough re-investigation of the existing organization, it should be possible to attain the originally planned scale of the Nato shield force.

That would provide the West with a non-suicidal form of defence, and a much safer deterrent than it has in its present reliance on the power of nuclear retaliation—which has become nonsensical now that Russia has achieved similar nuclear power and a lead in missile delivery THE END



Readers seeking advice from our team of experts are invited to send their problems to the "John Bull Illustrated" Free Advice Service, 189 High Holborn, London, W.C.1. Letters will be answered by post, and problems of general interest will also be published on this page

We advise...

MY son, who is five, was playing with another boy, aged six. He had a long piece of cable round his waist, and the other boy was using it as a rein. Both boys ran across the road and the cable caused a motor-cyclist to hit a hedge. He wasn't seriously injured—but now his insurance company has asked me what I am going to do about compensation. How should I deal with this?—P. W., Truro, Cornwall.

● If your son was within your control at the time of the accident you will be liable to compensate the motor-cyclist. He will have to prove that you were negligent in allowing your son to run into the road.

If you were not present when the accident occurred and could not have prevented it, you do not appear to be responsible.

HOT AIR TROUBLE

THE ceiling above our centre light fitting has become badly marked and as I shall be decorating shortly, I wonder if there is anything I can do to stop this happening again?—A. S., Manchester.

● The cause of the stain is dirty air which is sucked up and heated by the bulb, then thrown against the ceiling.

If you have a fitment with a hole at the bottom, the way to prevent further discolouration is to insert a disc of glass, plastic or Perspex into the cavity and then the air will cease to flow upwards at quite such a speed.

RENT BOOK STAMP

IS it necessary to put a twopenny stamp on a rent book each week, if the rent is £2 or more?—G. R. M., Swansea.

● If the rent book is used merely as a record of payments and is not an official receipt book, no stamp is required.

If, however, the landlord has always stamped each entry as being a receipt, he should continue to stamp them.

CLINK IN THE SINK

CAN you tell me the best way to deaden the sound from a stainless steel sink unit?—J. E. C., London, W.7.

● You could use foam-rubber mats inside your sink and also plastic racks for plates.

If this fails, perhaps you could try plastic plates.

CASH AND CARRY

OUR village has never paid water rates, but we have had a demand for rates for the past two years. We have to carry our water three hundred yards. Must I pay for the past two years, considering I haven't had a notice before now?—W. M. H., Machynlleth, Mon.

● You may be compelled to pay a water rate if the local authority provides a water supply for the district. It need not necessarily be laid on to the house.

You are also liable for the back rates, even if this is the first notice you've had.

MY NOISY BED

MY bed has a coiled spring underlay below the mattress. It squeaks very noisily at every movement. What is the cause of the noise and how can I prevent it?—I. K., Coleraine, Co. Derry.

● There are so many possible reasons for a bed squeaking that it is often difficult to determine the exact cause.

Tighten up all bolts and make the various joints secure. This is the only fault that can be rectified satisfactorily.

A SUMMER JOB

DURING my college vacation I should like to work on a farm, preferably in Kent, Surrey or Sussex. Where can I obtain information about such a job?—R. G., Surrey.

● The National Union of Students, Vacation Work Department, 3 Emsleigh Street, London, W.C.1, will endeavour to find employment for you during the summer vacation if you are a full-time student.

Alternatively, any employment exchange will have details of farm vacancies during the summer season.

NO SKIMPING

THE ceiling of my small kitchen is beginning to crack and I wonder if there is a less expensive remedy than having the whole thing replastered.—E. H., Leeds, 15.

● It seems that your only remedy is to hack off the defective plaster and do it again.

It is false economy to try and patch up plaster when it has reached the stage which you describe.

MY JOB HAD GONE

DURING three months' notice from my employers, because I was at retiring age, I got another job. Shortly before I was due to start, after a presentation from my old firm, they informed me that another man had got the job. Because of this I lost wages of £13 to the end of March and I am unable now to find other employment. What redress have I?—W. S., Harlesden, London, N.W.10.

● As you appear to have been definitely engaged by the new employer, he is liable for breach of contract now that he has refused to allow you to start working for him.

In the circumstances, you could claim for all actual loss you have incurred through the breach and if you cannot otherwise get satisfaction ask a solicitor to make your claim.

TREAT YOUR SUITE

I HAVE just bought a suite of Scandinavian design made of unpolished wood, the colour of which is described as "teak and ebony." How can I best keep it in good condition? Can I use polish on it? What should I do if it is stained in any way?—Mrs. M. B., Manchester, 12.

● Treat this furniture with linseed oil. Light applications and a good rub are all it needs.

Marks are also treated with linseed oil. If they are very bad, sandpaper lightly before applying it. Allow the oil to soak in thoroughly, then rub well with a polishing cloth.

WILL OF A WIFE

MY wife made a will leaving her share of our estate to her two children. There is very little money involved. Our bungalow was in our joint names, but I have had a request from the solicitor to furnish him with the deeds of the property and life insurance policies and bank books. How do I stand as far as household effects are concerned? Will they go in the sale of the bungalow which I understand will be made in a few weeks' time?—R. M., Wigan.

● As the bungalow was jointly owned it now passes automatically to you as the survivor.

You are entitled to claim any household goods that you have personally provided for the home, but those which belonged to your wife will be disposed of as directed by her will.

THAT CERTAIN SOUND

WHAT causes a noise like the wind when the dining-room door closes? When the door or the window is open the noise stops.—T. A. R., Monmouthshire.

● There probably is a gap in your window frame and when you open the door or window you equalize the pressure inside the room with that outside, so that the noise ceases.

The best remedy is to locate the gap and seal it up.

Worth Noting

ROGER SMITHELLS

keeps practical homelovers up to date

● **Paint brush cleaner:** Suspend paint brushes which have become hard with paint in a jar of Sokleen. This new treatment is guaranteed to remove thoroughly even the most stubborn of old paints. By Mangers, Kingsland, London, E.8. A half-pint tin costs 3s. or a quarter-gallon tin costs 10s. 6d. Available from paint stores everywhere.

● **Hair of the dog:** A strip of foam rubber tacked to the reverse side of your sweeping brush is a useful tip for dog owners. Passed lightly over the carpet it will pick up dog hairs sometimes missed by the vacuum cleaner. (Mrs. B. Noe, Plympton.)

● **Invisible mending:** Invisibly mend a tear in material, or the torn page of a book by placing a piece of polythene bag on the wrong side of the material, cover with a piece of smooth brown paper and press with a hot iron. (Mrs. B. G. Scarff, Needham Market.)

● **Dry store labels:** When labelling goods such as almonds and cloves in glass jam jars, stick the written label face out on the inside of the jar, securing it with Sellotape. This way the label will remain unsoiled and readable for very much longer. (Francis J. Robson, Scarborough.)

● **Eight position mattress:** The two sections of the new easy turn mattress enable it to be turned eight different ways, so giving it even wear. The sections measure 4 ft. 6 in. square and 1 ft. 9 in. by 4 ft. 6 in., and are undoubtedly simpler for the housewife to turn than one large mattress. Well sprung and padded, there is a choice of colours. Nylon handles give a firm grip when turning. By Vono Ltd., Tipton, Staffs, price for mattress only £15 19s. 6d., or complete with upholstered base £27 14s. 6d.

● **Carpet first aid:** A housewife's first aid kit for carpets, consisting of six bottles of fluids specially designed to remove all of fifty-five common household stains from carpets have now been produced by Servicemaster (Great Britain), Ltd. There is also a circular chart called the Dial-a-Spot, which enables you to look up the correct treatment for each stain at a moment's notice. The treatment is effective for wool, cotton and man-made fibre carpets. Remember it is important to treat all stains at once, before they have a chance to set. First aid for carpets kits are sold in two sizes, 12s. 6d. and 21s. in carpet departments of furnishing stores and shops.

* * *

If you have a trouble-saving, money-saving tip for this column, send it in to Roger Smithells, "John Bull Illustrated," 189 High Holborn, W.C.1. One guinea will be paid for each tip published.

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RULES 1. First Prize for best Bullet received; others in order of merit. The test is of cleverness, aptness and originality.

2. Editor undertakes that all Bullets received shall be accorded careful consideration by competent adjudicators.

3. As entry-fee enclose P.O. at the rate of 1s. per Bullet. Fee submitted will be taken to cover Bullets in coupon order—any sent in excess will be disqualified. Plain-paper entries are allowed. Make P.O. payable to JOHN BULL, cross /& Co./, write name and address on back. Coupons must not be mutilated.

4. Entries accepted by post only and on condition that result of this Contest (in JOHN BULL dated May 9), also Editor's decision in any matter of dispute, are accepted as final and legally binding. Odhams' employees (and families) ineligible.

(See "Daily Herald" on Saturday, April 25, for early news of Bullets No. 2,187 First Prize Award.)

Man, The Builder
A Golden Key
Ex-King Coal
Problem For Parents
On The Trade Front
Glory Of The Sunrise
We've All Got Faults, But
Unknown World
Job That's Worth Doing
Touching
Enemy Of The People
A Nice Change
Buried In The Country
Girl Of Today
If I Were The Boss
Speeded Up
Wreck Of A Car
When The Kids Are In Bed
An Old Song
What Is A Lie?

Last six Examples are incomplete: if you wish to use one, first complete it with a word of your choice—then make your Bullet as usual.

Beware Of.....And
.....Business
If They Abolished.....
The News From.....
Will Have To Be.....
In The.....Of The Mighty

ADDRESS ENTRY: Bullets, 2,187, "John Bull," Long Acre, London, W.C.99

LATEST WINNERS

Bullets No. 2,182 Result:

£800 Home Luxuries Award, or £750 cash: O. Duxbury, Garreg Wen, Burwen, Amlwch, Anglesey:

Explorer Philip—"Sails Into" The—*Unshown*!

£50 Mrs. K. Oxspring, 178 Bispham Road, Blackpool: **In Life's Storms—"Ahoy!" A Joy.**

£25 F. Gardiner, 165 Edmund Road, Sheffield: **In The Millionaire's Cellar—Magnums—In Glass, *Magnesia*!**

£10 S. Dutton, 2 Links Road, Heywood, Lancs: **Lesson For Everybody — "Enlightened" Natives *Burning* Schools!**

£9 Mrs. M. Varley, 59 Brackenbury Road, Preston, Lancs: **Crazy Spending—To Outdo *Nuclear* "Joneses"!**

£8 W. L. Hoole, 26 Chapel Street, Tiverton: **That Spring Feeling—Control—At *Car's* Controls!**

£7 A. Turville, Flat 7, 347 Grange Road, London, S.E.19: **Warning To The World—Every Sunset—"Fiery Globe."**

£6 E. A. Rossell, 11 Ashworth Avenue, Ruddington, Notts: **Crazy Planning—*Town* On The Farm!**

£5 Miss E. Gates, 14 Gilpin Street, Houghton-le-Spring: **Urgently Needed—Nurses, Beds, Donors—*Visitors*!**

£4 L. F. Valleley, 215 Victoria Avenue, Hull: **Thanks To Science — "Plague" Of *Healthy* Pensioners!**

Ten Prizes of £3 and 1,600 other Awards have also been posted.

POST THIS GIANT £1,500 CONTEST COUPON by MON. APR. 13

EXAMPLE ..... 1s. PER BULLET

BULLET .....
EX. .....
B. .....
EX. .....
B. .....
EX. .....
B. .....
EX. .....
B. .....

OVER **5,000 FREE GIFTS** ARRIVING THURS., APR. 30

Bullets **2,187**

Signed .....
Address .....
I agree to Rules and enclose .....
P.O. value ..... No. .....

* If entering 5 efforts, complete this **FREE GIFT LABEL**

Name .....
Address .....

£50,000 BULLETS BUDGET FOR ENTERING 5 EFFORTS ON THIS COUPON

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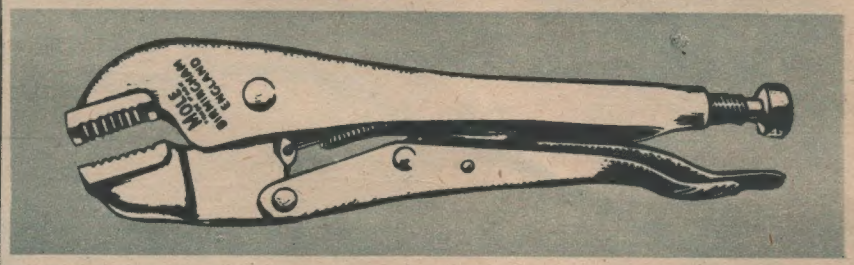
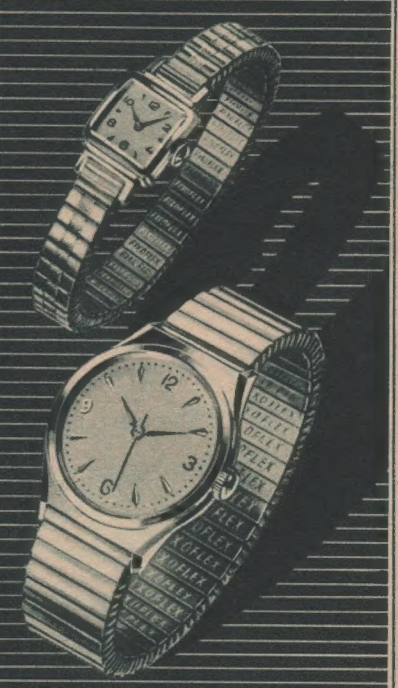
THE MOLE TRADE MARK SELF-GRIP WRENCH



Fixoflex

WATCH BRACELETS for Men and Women



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See page 32 for announcement.

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